







ALLA GIORNATA.

VOL. III.

LONDON

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“ALLA GIORNATA;”

OR,

TO THE DAY.

“ When I go musing all alone,
Thinking of divers things foreknown
When I build castles in the air,
Void of sorrow, and void of fear,
Pleasing myself with phantasms sweet,
Methinks the time runs very fleet.

Burton's Anatomy of Melancholy.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

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CHAPTER I.

STRATAGEM.

Non è timor, dove non è delitto :
Serberò fra ceppi ancora
Questa fronte ognor serena ;
E' la colpa, e non la pena,
Che può farmi impallidir.

Métastasio.

“ LISTEN attentively,” said Edoardo, addressing Hawkwood and Antonio de Baschi, “ and then judge for yourselves, whether or not my hopes are unfounded. When I left our troop, I directed my steps to the Locanda of the Aquila Nera, because I have ever remarked that those who seek for news, have a better chance to find it in that general receptacle for all variety of ranks

(an inn) than in any other place whatever; for sometimes the more refined the society, the less is to be gained from it. Well, I called for wine, and sat among a crowd of monks and peasants, listened to their discourse, and occasionally put in a word or two, when I thought I could elicit any thing respecting the state of the fortress, or the fate of Ranieri. But I observed my hearers to be very cautious how they admitted my taking any part whatever in their conversation, and was certain that they were under restraint from my presence. I made some apology, therefore, for removing my seat to the outside of the house, from whence I could see every thing that passed within. I remarked that they were conversing eagerly as to the propriety of some measure they had in contemplation; sometimes they spoke in a high angry tone, then looked at me suspiciously, and dropped their voices suddenly into a whisper; the words *Pietra Buona,—La Fortezza—bisogna che sia fatto*

subito—We cannot wait till he goes away : and similar phrases, that now and then distinctly reached my ear, convinced me that if I remained where I was, I should obtain the information I sought. At length I observed them filling a basket very busily, and, when it was laden, it was lifted upon a young peasant's shoulders, who moved with difficulty under the weight. I guessed immediately this was a messenger to the fortress, and I rejoiced to observe he was one, whose age and appearance assured me of being able to make my own use of his power and knowledge, to whatever extent they were employed : but, to avoid all suspicion on the part of the *locandiere*, I chose the opposite direction from that which their messenger pursued. My previous knowledge of the country enabled me, however, soon to fall into the track he had taken. I crossed through a wood, retraced my steps swiftly, and soon espied my man. By means of a high bank, I contrived to keep my

way nearly parallel with the one he followed, without his having once perceived me. Every step we took brought us nearer to the foot of the rock, on which the fortress is situated; and when arrived there, the ruins of an ancient fountain served me admirably as a screen, at the very spot where the ground became open, and the young peasant deposited his burthen to take breath, as well as to look around him with wary eye, in order to ascertain whether or not he was unobserved. I waited not long, when I saw him stoop down, and enter a low cavity in the rock, of which there are so many, as you well know, in this part of the country, that it is extremely difficult to distinguish one from another. So small was this aperture, that he had some difficulty in dragging in the basket after him. To follow him was the work of a moment, nor had I much courage to boast of, in so doing, for he was unarmed, and I had well provided myself with weapons, under my peasant's garb. I

pursued him, therefore, in perfect security, as to any fear I could entertain of him individually ; but when I found myself advanced some way into the cave, and that its opening width showed me dimly many branching ways issuing in various directions, I thought it best to secure the messenger, and gain from him what information I could, before I might be overpowered by numbers, and prevented from effecting my purpose. I sprang upon the lad, therefore, ere he had time to defend himself, had he been so inclined ; and stopped his mouth with my hands, before he could cry out ; saying in a low voice—‘ Do not utter a word, or you shall be instantly poniarded ;’ at the same time letting him feel my stiletto’s point. Fortunately, I never met with such a calf’s head on such a coward’s neck in my life, and dropping on his knees, he besought me only to spare his life. ‘ If you will but tell me,’ I said, ‘ whither you are going, who sent you, and what it is you are

carrying along with you, I promise not only to save your life, but to give you much gold into the bargain; whereas, if you attempt to utter the least cry, or to deceive me, this knife shall drink your heart's blood.'

“ ‘Oh! the saints have mercy upon me, Signor Cavaliere, and I will tell you all: I am a poor *garzone di bottega*, who carries parcels, goes of messages, and does any thing for any body, as you see, Signor; and I am only now conveying a little ice, as you know, to the *santi padri*, who cannot obtain it in the usual way, owing to those *maladetti condottieri*, who lie beleaguering the fortress. *Scusi*, Signor, mayhap you are one of them; I meant no offence, only we poor peasants, who are obliged to serve them with oil and wine and meat for nothing—we find it rather hard: *Scusi*, Signor.’

“ ‘Oh, yes, yes, I excuse you, only go on with your story.’

“ ‘Well, so as I was saying, the *poveri frati*

have not had a bit of ice these forty-eight hours, and we are sadly afraid they will be very angry at us, and give us no indulgences, although we could not help it; for my brother, who is the regular *facchino*, is very ill, and there was nobody they could send but me, for none other knows the way through these intricate underground paths; and yet, the padrones of the Aquila Nera did not like much to trust me, neither did I like to come, although they did give me a bit of the blessed taper to light me through the cave. And now, as I hope for the favour of St. Joseph, Signor Cavaliere, I have told you all: I beseech you, do not murder me, but let me go safely back to my poor little Teresina; she is dying of fright, while all these terrible *condottieri* are walking about every night: *Scusi*, Signor, she always said I should be killed; she was sure I should, because I was so brave, and so fond of fighting.'

“ ‘Hush!’ I replied, ‘not a hair of your cow-

ardly skull shall be touched, if you make no noise or resistance; and I quieted this pitiable creature's fears, and promised to take him back to his Teresina, provided he would come quietly with me for the present, and lose no more time in talking. 'In truth,' I added, 'whether you like it or not, come you must;' so saying, I took him by the arm, and brought him along with me.—It is your business, Signors, to keep him safe, while I now seek some repose. Under covert of the night we can recommence our enterprise; for on my way here I learned further particulars, which will enable us to get into the fortress with very small risk of failure. The cave communicates with the convent, the convent with the fortress; but for the greater security, the monks open a small iron-grated aperture in the rock, through which they examine the messengers who may be sent to them; and having done so, if all is safe, they then unlock a concealed door, which barely ad-

mits the entrance of one person at a time ; from thence another passage of considerable length leads to a wide space, partly formed by labour, partly by nature: there a guard of armed men is constantly kept, and from thence a flight of steps, cut in the rock, directly communicates with the chapel in the convent. Upon this information I propose to act : but there is no leisure for useless words ; let the measures I intend to take this night speak for themselves ; only second me, and, in so just a cause, I have not a doubt of success. Yet stay, one word more to cheer your heart, Signor Antonio de Baschi. One prisoner, I learned, who is supposed to be of great consequence, has been confined in the dungeon of the fortress, and is still alive ; but as to the others, most of them have died, some say owing to *quieting draughts*, for there were too many of them in the prisons ; they feared their numbers, not having sufficient guards to watch them.

Thus, you see, Ranieri is not dead ; and thus, you see, we shall this very night liberate him, and be masters of Pietra Buona."

" You see many things, that Argus with his hundred eyes could not," cried Hawkwood : " but what do you propose to do ? what wild scheme is in your head now ? for to follow your orders at the moment, my young sky-rocket, without previously knowing what probability there is of success, will not exactly suit either."

" I propose to get into the convent alone, by assuming the dress of Francesco ; once there, confide in me for giving the soldiers and the monks such potations as will keep them quiet for some hours ; then, when all is ready, I will make a signal agreed upon between us, and you must follow with as much celerity and as little noise as possible. While this is passing on the north side of the hill, an attack must be made on the south, to draw off the attention of the besieged ; and thus I have

not the least doubt they will easily fall into the net laid for them. *Oh! che bella caccia!* not but that I hate stratagems; I would far rather fight in broad daylight, when prowess is seen and appreciated; but when I think of Ranieri in a dungeon—Ranieri! who saved my life; when I think of the dreadful insinuation of the *quieting draught*, I am steeled to any thing short of murder. By the way, I charge ye, make one proviso with your men; let not a drop of blood be shed unnecessarily; not a blow dealt that can be spared: the women, the children, and the aged, to be held sacred.”

“Now, by my honour,” said Hawkwood, “one would think this stripling had an English heart. Italians have no objection to the stiletto; but here is one who reverses the general rule. I shall second your orders, my young commander; but there are some dozens of my rascals who would think no more of plunging their knives in a man’s body than in a hog’s, and that

out of mere wantonness, then kiss the crucifix the next minute."

"Well," rejoined Edoardo, "to keep them in subjection be your care."

"By St. George," cried Hawkwood, "thou art a brave soldier, and I am content to obey thee."

"But now I am obliged to confess," said Edoardo, "that sleep is on me like an armed man, and I must yield to its power." So saying, he rolled himself in his cloak, and charging them to keep a sharp look out upon his prisoner, he consigned himself to that sweet deep rest which is the reward of toil.

When Edoardo awoke, the shades of night were fast drawing around ; he started up, dressed himself in the garment of Francesco, and having, with the consent of Antonio de Baschi and Hawkwood, chosen the men he deemed most suited to the task he assigned them, he commanded that they should march on foot, leaving their

horses in the camp. He then placed his prisoner in the midst of the troop destined for the attack, which was to be made by the way of the cave ; and Antonio de Baschi headed the remainder of their little army, under his command, to attack the south side of the fortress. Ardent as Edoardo's mind was, his heart misgave him, lest in the pursuit of glory he should be the instrument of useless bloodshed, a thought at which his very soul sickened ; but it was too late now to recede ; “ I ought to have reflected upon this,” he ejaculated, “ before ; every hour has its own portion of duty to enforce ; the present one points to action : now for Ranieri and for glory. Signor Hawkwood, you called me, in derision, a sky-rocket ; be it so, and let that henceforth be my emblem, with this device *Che peri purchè m'inalza.*”

On arriving at the mouth of the cave, he halted the troop, and paused to let the sound of the tramping of the soldiers die away : not

feeling sure of his young prisoner, he took the precaution to tie a bandage over his mouth, so that he could not give the alarm, should he have been so disposed. Edoardo's next care was to ascertain that the provision of dainties he had previously prepared for the luxurious monks was ready; and having himself drugged the stimolanti with narcotics, a care which he was too conscientious to trust any one with but himself, he commanded Francesco to lead the way to the iron door, at which he was to be examined. Francesco pointed to a ring fixed in the rock, and made signs that Edoardo was to pull it: having ascertained this point, he fastened a small chain into the ground, and retraced his steps with his companion, in order to leave him in safe keeping in the outward entrance of the cave. Thus far all was executed in safety; and now, having told Hawkwood to hold his men in readiness to defile along the narrow passage, and, when it branched off in divers

directions, to choose that which was designated to be the right one by the guiding chain,—he returned to follow up his undertaking. He set down his basket as soon as he arrived at the spot where he was to put the success of his contrivance to the proof, and pulled heartily at the iron ring: immediately a loud bell resounded, and soon after a cowed head was seen indistinctly from a dark aperture above:—

“ *Che domanda? chi siete?* ”

“ *Un amico, un servitore.* ”

“ I am laden heavily, and in haste to be gone; pray do not keep me waiting long, for my poor brother is sick, and there is nobody to attend the guests at the Locanda but myself.” During this speech the eyes of the vigilant porter were silently examining him. “What have you brought us?” asked he, holding up his lamp. “Rosolio and Vermoot;”—and some massy bolts were now heavily drawn out, and a key was applied to the lock of a door,

which had hitherto remained concealed by a part of the stone being fixed in a frame of wood-work, and made to adhere so nicely, that no eye, not aware of the circumstance, could have discovered it. With much precaution, and feeling the basket as he passed, the porter admitted Edoardo into the interior ; but the door was shut to, after he had entered, and it was locked and bolted again carefully. His spirits sunk as he observed this circumstance, one which he had not counted upon, and which he had no means of providing against. To break open this entrance must, if done by force, be a work of infinite labour, impossible to be effected without waking the whole garrison. All he could do was to mark this man well, and to endeavour to ply him with a double dose of *stimolantes*. Many a wistful look did Edoardo cast at the massive key which hung by an iron chain fixed round his waist ; and without uttering a word more, he followed the *frate's* footsteps

along another passage, until they arrived at a second door, where they underwent the same scrutiny. “ Ah!” thought Edoardo, “ I am lost ; never shall I succeed ; but I will do my duty, and if I perish—I perish.” Immediately on the opening of this door they entered a large vaulted space, the confines of which were not discernible, owing to a blaze of light which beamed dazzlingly in the centre, and around which sat a number of armed men and monks, talking loudly, and occasionally vociferating tremendous oaths ; some of whose persons, he fancied, he had seen before ; which added, in no small degree, to his confusion. From these he particularly endeavoured to glide away, but they called him, “ *Chi siete voi ?*”

“ Why did not Francesco come, as it was settled he should ?”

“ I give you my honour, my poor brother is in such a situation at this moment, that it is quite impossible for him to move ; he told me,

however, of what vintage you liked your *aleatico* and your *monte pulciano*, and I have taken good care it should be exactly to your taste ; then the ice is *fresca fresca*."

"You are a droll one," said a soldier, turning him round and looking suspiciously at him.

"Ah! doubtless," said Edoardo, summoning up all his presence of mind ; "doubtless I have some drollery about me, or I should not be entrusted, as I am, with all the love-stories of Pietra Buona and its vicinity. There's poor little Teresina,—often and often have I carried a love-present from Francesco to her, and been rewarded by the sweetest smile of her cunning eyes."

"Oh! oh! you know Teresina, do you? and tell me,—do you really believe she loves that moon-calf Francesco?" And here followed a world of questions, which proved that he had completely turned the tide of their suspicions; but he began to be afraid that other

questions might ensue, to answer which he should not come off so successfully, and he feigned to busy himself with unpacking his goods. But he did not so eagerly evade his persecutors. "So you were he, my brave boy, who cheated the old Romanelli, Teresina's father; and while you sold your *stimolante* to him, made signs to his daughter to go out to her lover who was waiting for her?"

"Oh yes! that I did; and then her old mother, how nicely I tricked her!"—

"Mother! why her mother has been dead these ten years."

"Mother! did I say mother? oh! father, I mean—very true, ah! ah! Yes; one need not trick dead people—very true; they are quiet enough—no, I meant to say father; the time I gave him the brandy instead of a glass of iced water; how he tumbled about, and then slept and snored, and the young ones had such fine pastime at the *fiera*!"

“ *Fiera!* what *fiera?* tell us what you mean? there has been no fair nearer than Florence these five years.”

“ Oh, ay, very true! what, did I say fair! bless me, I meant vintage;—to be sure, at the last year’s vintage.” And now again, with renewed earnestness, he set himself to fill out his *stimolante*, and adroitly turned the conversation by saying, he would bet any man a sequin they did not guess what wine he would give them. This had the desired effect, and they all began asking him where *he* indeed had seen a sequin, to be able to talk of it thus boastingly. The liquors now went freely round; they were pronounced to be exquisite, and not a man stayed his hand, but tossed off, first one cup, then another.

“ Softly, softly!” cried the monk, whose province it was to provide for the refectory; “ part of all; these goods belong to me;”—and he portioned them out; then recommended the

soldiers to be moderate, slung as many flasks as he could carry under the folds of his garments, and departed. It was now that Edoardo's self-framed system of education stood him in good stead;—he adapted himself completely to his company, told stories, particularly stories of the sea, which he had heard related by the mariners of Leghorn, for which he received marvellous commendation. One of these ran as follows:—

“ Captain Black, of the ship *Syren*, from Leghorn, bound to Naples, sailed from the latter place on Friday the 2d of April, about ten years ago—(remember, never sail on a Friday, so says Captain Black). He was scudding under easy sail at 3 P. M. on the 2d of April, as I said, when the first mate was walking quarter deck, and discovered, as he supposed, a vessel, bottom upwards, three points on the weather-bow; braced sharp, and came up within forty feet of the monster, for such it proved to be; a surprising animal, a sea-serpent; it lay sleep-

ing on the sea, in the form of a turtle—height, above water, ten or fifteen feet ; length, twenty-three to thirty ; breadth, twelve feet. It had oars or flippers on each side, instead of fins, one third of the way forward from the tail ; length of these, twelve to fifteen feet ; another on each side, near his tail, five or six feet ; tail, twenty to twenty-five feet ; with a large lion-like face, resting over his tail, or, I should say, the after part, with large red eyes. The shell, or body of the serpent, looked like a clinker-built vessel of thirty tons, bottom up, with the seams or laps newly paid, some large barnacles about the body. It was steering South-east. He was going through the water at the rate of $1\frac{1}{2}$ knots an hour ; a vessel to run foul of him would have received great damage, if it had not been totally swamped ; and it was the mercy of Providence only which saved us from so dreadful a fate. Mem. never more go to sea on a Friday :” And now Edoardo’s hearers gathered round him.

gazed at him as if he was an oracle, and asked so many questions respecting the size and appearance of the serpent, that he could only take refuge in a fresh supply of rosolio. But those men were in number twenty, and he looked at their fierce countenances almost despairingly, still more so, as he saw the porter departing.

“ *Santo padre, santo padre !* you forget that I must very soon go home, for there is no one, as I have before had the honour of telling you, but myself at the Aquila Nera ; and, if you go away, who will let me out ? ”

“ True, very true : moreover, methinks, the sooner you are off the better. Here, Frate Celestino, I entrust you with my charge,” unhooking the ring from his leathern belt, to which they pended, and giving them to the second porter. “ Be watchful ; see that all is secured when the facchino goes away : and, hark ye, let him not stay much longer.”

So saying, he went reeling out at an oppo-

site door, through which a flight of steps was distinguishable. "Now," thought Edoardo, while hope rekindled in his breast, "I have but one from whom to steal the keys."

Merrily the laugh and song went round, and the wine and *stimolante* began to take effect: first one dropped off to sleep, then another; but the porter sat aloof, took sparingly of the liquor, and appeared to look with very suspicious eyes on Edoardo, as the effect produced on the soldiers by it became more general. He warned them repeatedly not to indulge so freely; but they were too far gone in their orgies, to relish advice, or to stand in awe of any control, and began joking the *guardiano* rather roughly. His spirit at length fired at their insolence, and he threatened them with going instantly to the *superiore*.

"You'll go, will you, and tell tales of us? Ah, ah, friend, we'll see how many can play at this game;" and they surrounded him. "Yes,

yes, you shall go,—we will send you, but not till you have drunk a health to every one of us;—Here,” said the speaker, waving a flask in the air, “*Brindisi a Vossignoria!*” and he passed the liquor to him. “Now, return us the compliment,” and they forced him to drink: “*Adesso a voi, Ricardo,*”—and again to the next in the ring, and so on, shouting and screaming with delight, as they saw his eyes begin to twinkle, and his face every instant assume a solemnity of expression, wholly at variance with the sparkle in his look, and the purple in his cheek. “*Bravo! bravo! padre guardiano,*” and they hustled him along, till his unsteady feet could bear their burthen no longer, and down he rolled.

“Enough, enough, *per pietà,*” exclaimed Edoardo, “there let him sleep;” for he thought they would murder the man. “Your anger against him should cease now, for—*morta la bestia, morta la veleno,* is a well-known proverb.”

“ Ay, ay, let him sleep,” roared out another voice, “ he’s good for nothing now, we can get no more sport out of him. Come, here we are as free as kings, or rather as free as the birds of the air, for the poor kings, God bless them ! are any thing but free. See here we have all the delights of life—*Pan che veda, Vin che salti, Formaggio che pianga ;*”—and again, coarse mirth, wine, and uproar, ruled the hour.

Edoardo watched the party with anxious eye, and very soon the sounds they uttered became more and more inarticulate, till not a man remained that was not sunk in speechless inebriety or profound sleep. Edoardo gasped with breathless anxiety, and then with noiseless step reached the *portiere*, whose body lay directly across the entrance door, and his keys still grasped in his hand. Softly he endeavoured to unbend the fingers, but they were as rigid as the iron they held ; first one, then another, was gently forced open ; the keys were actually in Edoardo’s

hand, when he started, and half raising himself, while his drunken eyes leered with a cunning malignant expression, he cried out, "*Avere un occhio alla pentola e l'altro alla gutta*, is always my maxim."

"Ah! ah! say you so, my gay *fachino*?"

"*Birbone,—one,—one,*" and down he dropped again, soon afterwards snoring loudly as before. Edoardo, who had stood like one who has lost all hope, again revived; he looked around,—no one moved; no other sound was heard except the loud breathings of the senseless men. He applied the key to the lock with a trembling hand, while standing across the body of the *portiere*, and held an uplifted stiletto in the other, but a prayer was at his heart that he might not be compelled to use it. The door opened, he leapt lightly over the sleeping porter, flew along the passage to the next door, opened that likewise, held up the lamp, as it was agreed he should do for a

signal ; and, in a few minutes more, Hawkwood and his troop were in the cave. Their first care was to bind the sleepers with the chains they had provided for that purpose ; some of them half awoke, and cried out “ To arms ! ” but the narcotic drugs had steeped their senses too effectually to allow of their making any resistance ; and Hawkwood and his men passed on without molestation, according to the directions of Francesco, through an opposite door, which led to a long and steep flight of steps cut in the body of the rock : having reached the summit of these, and lifted a heavy leathern curtain, they found themselves in the church of the convent behind the altar.

“ The first thing to do,” said Edoardo, “ is to cut down or destroy the bells. But, hark ye, as you value your lives, touch not the consecrated vessels ; deface not, nor mar any thing which ought to be respected ;—and now follow me ;” saying which they passed on through the

church, scaring a few of the monks who were at their early devotions, and assembled their whole troop in the refectory. From the windows of this part of the building they discovered, in the first glimmering of daylight, that the fortress was only divided from the convent by an archway thrown over a deep ravine, at the entrance of which was a numerous guard.

“Here,” said Edoardo, “warfare must take its course. For Ranieri, and for glory!” cried he, and breaking down one of the casements, he dashed through it, leaping down on the archway, and was followed by all his own adherents first, and then Hawkwood and his men imitated the gallant example, and took that perilous leap which consigned them to conquest or to death, all retreat, from the nature of the place, being impracticable. They rushed on like an unimpeded torrent, and though surprise and dismay made the first sentinels an easy prey,

the second guard had perceived their danger, and were determined to make a gallant defence. The portal which they protected was narrow and low, resolutely guarded by those within its gates, and eagerly disputed by the assailants without: the battle raged, and the ground was slippery with the blood of the slain. It seemed impossible to penetrate further, until Edoardo, whose quick eye and prompt judgment seized upon every circumstance, and took in all the bearings of every subject with unexampled celerity of decision, perceived that it was possible to climb the portal, and passing the word of command to his own self-trained band, they scaled the walls like so many lizards, when dropping down in the interior of the gate, in the very midst of the men who were defending themselves from their outward assailants, they carried dismay and confusion to their enemies. The suddenness of this measure, the vigour of the combatants, the intrepidity of these

young and half-naked soldiers, struck a panic into the hearts of the besieged, who, ever prone to superstition, ascribed this unexpected attack to some supernatural agency; and, thus assailed in front and in the rear, fought with the desperation of men devoting themselves to certain destruction. A terrible carnage ensued; Edoardo stood pale in the midst of his glory, and fain would have stayed the slaughter; but war had given the reins to death, and all those who defended the gate fell in one heap in a soldier's glorious grave. The conquerors now passed on, without opposition, to the interior of the castle; for all the remainder of the troops were engaged by Antonio on the other part of the fortress. Fantini, the governor, was taken in his bed, stupefied from a debauch of the preceding night, and could be hardly made to understand that he was a prisoner. Hawkwood led on his troops to unite their strength with Antonio's, and the unexpected appearance of

the latter immediately decided the fate of the day.

No sooner were the inhabitants aware of their being once more in the power of the Pisans, than the greatest part of the female population came out to meet them, weeping for joy, and screaming with delight; while some of the opposite party were plunged in shame and sorrow; and among those who rejoiced were mingled others, who shed the bitter tears that no glory wipes away. Thus between the happiness of the one and the wretchedness of the other, there was matter to stir the most insensible heart. Edoardo felt it all:—he was covered with laurels and with praise, but he escaped from this well-merited homage to seek Ranieri. Not less anxious had the Lanfreducci on his part been from the moment he heard the fortress was besieged, to join the assailants, but his right arm was disabled, and he was otherwise grievously wounded. What a meeting!

what an explanation ! As if electrified by reviving hope, Ranieri started from his couch, and demanded that a horse should be immediately prepared. “ I am already, oh, fatal certainty ! a day beyond my promised return ! ” and the conquest of Pietra Buona, at that moment seemed to him an insignificant consideration in comparison with that dearer interest which was nearest his heart. Edoardo lamented the mischance that had befallen him, and modestly told the risks he had himself run to redeem, if possible, the man who had saved his life. “ Now it is your turn to relate what befel you, Signor, since the night of our unsuccessful attempt on the fortress.”

“ I was struck down senseless the moment I put my foot on the bastion. What became of me afterwards I know not, until I found myself in this room, and was informed by the governor’s wife, that in consequence of a jewel I wore, I was supposed to be a person of rank,

who might be ransomed at some immense sum, and was therefore carried before Stefano. From an ancient hatred to my family, he expressed, as I have been since told, a fiendish delight when he beheld me, and commanded that my life might be carefully preserved, until he had the pleasure of either impaling or roasting me alive, so soon as he should have leisure to see the sport. My wounds were tended, but I was chained in a dungeon of the fortress, and when consciousness first returned I opened my eyes in that noisome place; where I did not, however, pass many hours; for a person entered my prison, and told me in few words that my father had saved his life in battle, and he now blessed Heaven that he could testify his gratitude to his son. ‘I am a servant of the governor’s wife,’ he added, ‘brother to the Custodé of the Campo Santo at Pisa; and by my situation in Signor Stefano’s family, I have obtained the means of liberating you: come to my house, where

you may remain concealed till such time as you are so far recovered as to effect your escape.' He continued to assist me here, and, except that my arm is powerless, I am again restored sufficiently to go hence directly on my return to Pisa. Let me only speak to the commanders, that I may secure to you the honours you have so gallantly won, and I will not delay another moment."

"Talk not of honours" Signor," said Edoardo mournfully; "I have done nothing but practised mere boyish tricks, which have fortunately been put to a good, instead of a bad use, and I should feel any reward for such puerile deeds to be mockery, not honour. Your friendship, Signor, has amply repaid me for all that I have done."

In vain Ranieri pressed Edoardo to accompany him to the captains Hawkwood and Antonio de Baschi; he firmly refused to comply, and only said, "Remember Edoardo,

and preserve your good opinion of him unimpaired until he can claim its confirmation for deeds, not quite so insignificant as these. One favour only do I ask; it is that Hawkwood allows me to follow his fortunes and be under his command. Ascertain this for me, and let me know where I shall meet him in a month hence: I will call for your answer in an hour. Farewell, good Signor, may all happiness attend you."

Ranieri obtained the desired favour easily from the English captain, who was delighted with the noble bearing of Edoardo. Antonio was left to guard the fortress; and Hawkwood was to follow in a few days to Pisa. But Ranieri's impatience could not be staid, and the next day he set forth for that city.

CHAPTER II.

DISAPPOINTMENT.

“ Providentia Dei omnia gubernantur, et quæ putatur pœna, medicina est.

St. Jerome.

THE first moments of disappointment, the first chill of the heart's warm and innocent affections, are indeed moments never to be forgotten. Like a limb that has been amputated, the primary anguish subsides with the immediate suffering ; (who could exist under its continuance ?) but, as in the mutilated member, a frequently recurring pang is said to be felt, even as though the limb itself were still constituting a part of the person—so are sorrows, losses, estrangements, gifted with a cruel tenacity to wound the heart,

long after their primary power of affliction is past.

As Ranieri journeyed towards Pisa, he revelled in the glow of imagination, with that fancied certainty of full unutterable bliss, which the prospect of meeting with a beloved object, after an absence when we doubt not their truth, cannot fail to inspire; but as he approached the place to which all his hopes tended, an unaccountable depression seized him. He cast a rapid glance on all the well-known objects as he passed—*they* were unchanged, and their unaltered aspect was grateful to his feelings. It was well; it was delightful to see them thus—they seemed to give assurance to his hopes. The shadows of the buildings lay reflected in the Arno, in their usual distinct and faithful clearness of repetition: the winged bark glided rapidly down the stream, and the merchants of various nations were folding up their goods for the night, which had been displayed to catch the fancies of the passengers:

all inanimate nature, or what we call such, together with the customs of the place and the season, were unaltered, and yet (oh ! unaccountable and mysterious power, which some persons feel at all times, and most persons at some time of their life,) a blackness seemed to rise before Rannieri's path, a suffocation oppressed his labouring breath. He strained his eyes to look forward up the Lung' Arno ; and now he approached the palace of his hopes, and now his weary courser drooped his head with distended nostrils, and heaved its panting sides before the portal. He knocked—no answer. He called the well-known watch-word, *Alla Giornata!*—all was silent ; then with a trembling hand he knocked louder—louder still, and he heard the echo of the sounds repeated within, and dying away to silence. A freezing chill ran through his veins ; he looked up, the *persianas* were closed : he looked around, and dared not question the passengers, but one of them stopped of his own accord, holding

up the pointed finger, and saying, "*Non c'è nessuno*. The Marchesa is gone, and has left the palace in the care of the Montescudajo." At this intelligence, the blood which had left Ranieri's pulse, rushed with warm tide to give him back the full sense of all his anguish. Ildegarda gone; not even one of her servants to be seen; no message from her whatever left for him; and the palace in the care of Montescudajo, his mortal foe! What an accumulation of unaccountable and distressing circumstances! When he recovered sufficiently from the shock he had received to move away, he led his horse towards the house of Cassini, where he hoped for some elucidation of these mysterious events—"There, at least," he said, "I shall be sure of hearing tidings of those who are dear to me; there I shall be certain of meeting a heart whose feelings will echo mine."

As he walked slowly back again, down the

other side of the Arno, his steps were feeble from illness and fatigue, the shadows lengthened, the rosy hue of the sunset on the river was fled, the brief twilight of Italy sunk to sudden night. As the Lanfreducci approached the well-known house of Cassini, he saw, while yet a considerable way off, a great blaze of light shining from the windows, as if there was an illumination there, and a busy throng were passing to and fro, while sounds of unusual noisy revelry became more and more distinct, till he found himself in the midst of a crowd, jostled first on one side, then on another. What could this mean? had he mistaken the house? Oh no, there was the cypress towering over the garden-wall, in all their pyramidal unaltered stateliness; there, too, was the oft-admired fountain, its waters sparkling in the moon-beam; but the quiet, the serenity, the peace, that used to claim that mansion for their own, where was it?—in the good Cassini's grave!

“Tell me the cause of this festivity,” said Ranieri to one of the crowd; “does Cassini give a *festa*?”

“Where do you come from, *sciocco*? was the questioning reply, “that you are so ignorant as not to know the Contessa Zerlina’s Casino, and the good old *Dottore* is dead and buried long ago: if you want him, you must go seek him in the Campo Santo.”

Ranieri’s flesh crept on his bones: Ildegarda vanished—Cassini dead! whither should he turn his footsteps?—“Oh my mother! oh, Ermenegilda! pardon, pardon; you are still left to me;” and again he sorrowfully paced the town, no longer filled with a busy crowd, but dark and solitary, like his own thoughts; till, turning a corner of the Borgo, he beheld, by the light of a large fire, kindled in the middle of the street, effigies of two persons surmounted with figures of devils and witches. He would have passed by, but the rabble con-

strained him to stop, begging for some ba—— to burn the sorcerers Scaramuccio Intingolo Scappavia and his old mother, La gran Strega della Toscana—Ranieri stood aghast.

“What mean you, fools that you are? He whom you call sorcerer, is an excellent and wonderful boy, who has just been the means of conquering Pietra Buona, and restoring it to our city.

“So, so,” softly cried the ringleaders of the crowd, “what is this you say? You shall be burned along with them; for you are, I perceive, one of their crew.”

“Silence, begone!” rejoined Lanfreducci, in a voice of command; “trouble me not, as you value your own lives; I am Lanfreducci, and have just brought you tidings of the capture of Pietra Buona. In a very few days, the brave English captain who engaged in our cause, will be here to vouch for my words. Away, let me pass, I am in haste, and am ill and wounded—detain me not.”

The rabble were silenced, and, holding up torches to his countenance, they exclaimed with various expressions of astonishment—

“ Oh ! it is Messer Ranieri, sure enough, and none other ;” and then upon their recognition of him, they hailed his arrival with enthusiastic delight, and welcomed *him* as a conqueror who but the moment before they would have burned, together with the effigies of the imputed sorcerers. It was in vain he assured them he had no share in the glory of the siege of Pietra Buona, that it was effected entirely by the very person whose image they were committing to the flames ; they persisted in assigning to him the merit of the conquest, and made the air resound with his name. Oh ! breath of popular applause, how vain, unstable, and senseless is thy homage, at once the most inebriating and evanescent of all the illusory delights enjoyed by man !

The mob now followed Ranieri to his palace, and while the wide staircase rung with the cries

of “*Viva la patria! viva Ranieri!*” there was a deadly silence in his heart; for no voice of affection greeted his return, no well-known face beamed with loving welcome, even the very servants who received him were strangers.

“Where is my mother? where are my attendants?” he asked, with wild astonishment pictured in his countenance. The domestics stared at each other, and replied hesitatingly, that the Signora Madre had been gone about a fortnight; they believed she had left her palace in the care of the magistrates, by whose orders they were placed there; and they were commanded, in the event of Messer Ranieri’s return, immediately to inform the Conte di Montescudajo of his arrival, which they had accordingly done. Ranieri dismissed them all, and sat down in his lonely palace with the feeling of utter desolation. He endeavoured to collect his scattered senses, and to adopt some resolution whereon to act, and what steps to pursue, for he saw evidently that the

long-threatened bolt of vengeance had burst on the head of Ildegarda ; but why his mother should be involved in the ruin, he could in no way devise. Some deep laid scheme of villany had been formed, and that they had fallen into the snare, was certain, for that either Ildegarda or the Lanfreducci should have suddenly departed without leaving any message for him, and should have consigned the whole of their possessions to Montescudajo's care, was utterly impossible. But what measures should he take ? should he abide the issue of this affair, carry on his investigations openly, or retire to some place of concealment, from whence, with greater security, he could bring the criminal actions to light ? for the secret malice which had worked such baneful effects, might possibly dare to operate likewise upon himself, and render it impossible for him, even to serve the dear objects of his love. These were the questions he asked himself, but he was prevented from any choice

or decision, for a concourse of people surrounded the palace, the one half calling out for Ranieri the Conqueror, while another meeting tide of persons, headed by the Anziani, and preceded by guards, made good their way through the crowd, and were in a few minutes more assembled in the great hall, where sat Ranieri, with indignation imprinted on his countenance, and defiance expressed in his air and gesture.

“We are very much chagrined, Signor,” said Gamba Corta breathlessly, and turning his little red eyes every way, except on the countenance of him he addressed; “We are very sorry to be obliged to announce to you, that having heard you had leagued yourself with divers mal-conditioned and evil-minded persons to act against the interests of the State, without the leave or approbation of us, its legally constituted governors, we have been necessitated to place your lady mother under surveillance,

and to take charge of your palaces and possessions until such time as you have been tried by the laws of your country ; and your innocence of these heavy charges either confirmed or disproved, sentence will be pronounced accordingly."

The doubts on Ranieri's mind were in an instant dispelled: he saw the whole plot unveiled before him: but the extent of its power was not confined to his own person or interests, it affected those dearest to him, and he determined not to suffer his indignation to betray him into any imprudence or intemperance of speech. He then repelled the charge brought against him; related the whole story, as far as he was concerned, commencing at Volterra, and finishing with the capture of Pietra Buona. He spoke of Scaramuccio as the hero of the day, extolled him much, and said, wherever he might be, Pisa or any other State ought to be proud to claim him as their own. His actions ennobled his origin, however low

and, as for the idle superstitions of the vulgar, they were a disgrace to those governments who suffered them to be entertained to the detriment of any individual."

The substance of this speech was quickly repeated to the populace who stood without the palace walls, when their enthusiasm became irrepressible. Their clamours to behold Messer Ranieri, their hero, were not to be silenced, and their expressions of devotion to him knew no bounds.

"Shall we order the guards to silence these yelping hounds?" whispered Montescudajo.

"Not now, not publicly," replied Gamba Corta; "we must *seem* to yield; there is nothing else left for it." Then turning to Ranieri, he said aloud; "We always were inclined, Signor, to honour you and yours, but our duty commanded us to act as we have done; indeed, your thanks rather than your anger ought to attend the steps we have taken; for your Signora

Madre is in high and honourable safeguard, and your possessions have been protected from the depredations which evil-disposed persons might have made upon them, had we not ourselves looked to them with a protecting, I may say, with a parental eye. The great love of duty we have proposed to ourselves to be guided by, still demands that we detain you in Pisa, until such time as the matters you have related to us can be duly examined into, and we trust that you will conceive we are only acting as you would do yourself, were our situations reversed. In the meantime command our services, and accept our acknowledgments, for the bravery of your conduct, and the nobility of *motive* which guided you to so uncertain a goal, however mistaken we conceive it to have been."

'They now requested Ranieri would show himself from his balcony to the people, and besought him to express his satisfaction at their

own conduct towards himself. To the first part of this request he immediately consented ; but professed himself highly incensed at having been prejudged, and at the unnecessary severity of making his mother quit her abode, and above all, placing her in one unknown to him,—a circumstance he would not cease to complain of until the cause of such complaint should be removed. They assured him they only awaited the decision of the public council which they would assemble without loss of time, and again recommended him to have a little patience and forbearance, rather than reduce them to adopt measures which might be as prejudicial to his wishes, as it was counter to theirs ; but this speech was utterly lost in the vociferation of the populace, who were loud in acclamations of favour to Ranieri, and in the most threatening and contumelious language against the magistracy. Lanfreducci thought it most prudent to allay this tumultuous popu-

larity, and addressing the people from the balcony, he thanked them warmly, requested them to remain his friends, but assured them that the best way to do this was to leave him to be judged by the laws of his country, and not to take any hasty or violent measures which could only affix the very stigma to his character of which he was wrongfully accused, and which he would not wilfully incur by suffering any public but momentary sentiments in his favour, however grateful to his feeling, to usurp the place of that cooler judgment, which could alone obtain their lasting esteem, or the approbation of his own conscience.

The crowd rent the air with acclamations, and having satisfied themselves by appointing some of their number to keep guard at his door, the rest quietly dispersed.

“ You see,” said Gamba Corta, with affected courtesy, while rage and dismay were at his heart, “ you see how you are loved—well may

you, in return, love your country. And now, Signor, in a very few days we shall hold a council, when our brother returns from Leghorn, and our thanks doubtless will be publicly joined to those of the people. Then La Signora Madre will be restored to you, and the general voice will be the echo of our own sentiments:—but we must do all things in order.” Ranieri bowed in gloomy silence, and with that look of unrepressed disdain, to which he denied his lips the expression, but which was not the less forcibly conveyed to those who observed his countenance.

Ranieri was left alone; the tread of the guard at his palace-gate, and the rush of the river, alone broke the silence of the night; but this very tranquillity seemed to give a keener tongue to the many voices that spoke within him. There was, in truth, enough to employ his mind; on the one hand, the esteem in which he was held by the public appro-

bation of his country, and which he might never have known except from the painful circumstances in which he was placed, could but be precious to him; on the other, he foresaw that he had for that very reason every thing to fear from the treachery of his enemies. Still he thought his honour demanded him not to attempt an escape, but to abide the issue of the decision of the magistrates, which he conceived must of necessity be favourable, considering the general sentiment which existed in his behalf.

Some days followed each other, leaving Ranieri in this wretched suspense; and he came to a resolution, seeing that nothing was likely to be decided, to demand publicly that justice should be done him, and enforce this demand, while his popularity was yet in all its freshness of vigour. Ere he took this step, he wished, if possible, to find out the mode of Ildegarda's departure, as well as of his mother's.

It was scarcely possible, he conceived, but some one must have been acquainted with the route they had taken; that every one of their retainers and friends should be swept off the earth was so improbable, that he wandered out, determined to leave no possible channel of enquiry unresorted to: as yet his liberty was his own,—how soon he might be deprived of it seemed to him very problematical. In that case, to rouse the people to his rescue would not, he thought, be difficult, and then the whole face of his affairs would take a different aspect, and it became another consideration how he should conduct himself if driven to such extremities. In this temper of mind, Raineri took the dear and well-remembered way to the Campo Santo. As he entered the quiet of that holy ground, where in small space (compared to the greatness of the objects that adorn it) so much of ennobling sentiment is found, his heart swelled with the most pain-

ful feelings. The sudden and unaccountable changes which had occurred in the space of about three weeks, he now referred to, one by one, and dwelt upon with intense and mournful interest—Ildegarda—his mother—their whole household, vanished from the face of the earth;—Cassini dead, forgotten like the most insignificant of the children of clay, his very name obliterated from the minds of those he had dwelt amongst, and for whom he had shown the most unremitting care, the most parental solicitude—what a lesson for the vanity of man! ah! what a warning even to the best and tenderest affections; the better, the tenderer these are, the more exalted and the more devoted, the less are they fitted to be the residents of the earth.

In vain Ranieri looked around for any familiar countenance on which he might read a record of the past; it seemed as if all such had been swept away in one general destruction—the

whole had evaporated like a mist of the night; and, except the melancholy sensation that inanimate objects change not with the same facility, but remain, as it were in mockery of man, unaltered, while all animated creatures pass rapidly away, he could have believed that his former existence was ideal, so often do dreams appear realities, and realities appear to be dreams.

At length, when the *Custode* came to open the gates to admit him into the interior of the Campo Santo, he beheld a face he had formerly seen; and he could have pressed the old man in his arms, had he given way to the joyous emotion which such a recognition, at such a moment, elicited.

“Show me the grave of Cassini,” said Ranièri, “and relate to me all the particulars of his death.”

“You knew him then?” questioned the old man, “and you loved him, since you seek his

grave: how few seek the graves of those they loved when living! I am an old man, and my eyes are very dim; I only see the light from the darkness, but I can tell every stone of these walls, and I can guide you to the spot; though, if you took me to the other side of the Lung' Arno, you would need to guide me. Here, come this way," feeling with his staff, "round this block of granite that lies here in the long grass; there is nothing to mark the place, but I know it well, ay, *here it is*; and little did I ever think to say that over *his* grave. The poor will never have such a friend; the rich will never have such an example."

Ranieri gave vent to unrepressed emotion; a fine eulogium, however eloquent, would have been counter to the simple truth of his sorrow; but this old blind man's expression of regret was in accord with all his feelings. "You loved him then, Signor? and I love you for it."

Ranieri grasped the old man's hand. "What, you are a stranger, and yet so moved at his loss? A stranger, no; surely I have seen you before, if my dim eyes do not quite deceive me. Why, can it be? Yes, sure enough thou art Messer Ranieri, who used at one time so often to be here with the great Gherardesca, the beloved lady of Pisa, the rose and glory of the day. Ah! I bless the saints that I have lived to see your honoured face once more! and where is the Gherardesca gone to? they tell me she has left her palace, and her loving country folks, to go far away beyond seas. Oh! I have lived too long, since I have lived to see the best and the greatest turned away!"

Ranieri at length had found an answering heart, and though overcome by the tenderness which this sympathy called forth, he felt refreshed at the indulgence of a grief, which would have been repressed before a sterner witness.

“*Pappa, pappa, apriteci,*” cried a child’s voice from the outside of the gate.

“ ’Tis my little grandchild,” said the old man, “*La Muggherina,*” and he moved quickly to let her in.

La Muggherina was well named, as white as a lily, and as delicate: in one hand she held flowers, in another a little silver cup, and some other tiny children followed her, one of them bearing a wooden cross. They walked in a very orderly manner to the grave of Cassini, and poured the water upon it from the silver cup, and stuck their flowers in the earth, and said a little Latin prayer, in broken accents, as they knelt around; then, with the gay joyousness of their age, they got up and ran screaming away after the butterflies and wild flowers that grew among the grass of that untrodden sanctuary.

“*Carina,*” said the old man, calling *Muggherina* to him, and patting his grandchild on

the head, "you did not forget, I hope, to go to our priest, to get the cup blessed."

"Oh, no!" she answered, "the cup and the flowers were both blessed, and the holy water was taken from the font of St. Ranieri."

"'Tis well," he said; "return to thy sport."

The Lanfreducci beheld all this with great but silent interest. The grave of the good man is never forsaken, thought he, though there are no marbles, no inscriptions, no orations to honour the memory of him who lies beneath. After having offered up his own heartfelt tribute of pious sorrow, with the children and the old man's evening orison, he continued to pace the cloister with Bernardo, and he learnt from him, that Cassini was said to have fallen into a sort of fit, which ended in a lethargy, and four-and-twenty hours after the commencement of his illness he was a corpse.

"There have not been lacking some," said

Bernardo, “who attribute this sudden visitation to poison; but, perhaps, they were wrong, for Cassini was a very old man, much older than was supposed, for he was young in spirit; and, after all, his death to himself was blessed—he was taken to receive the reward of his virtue. We weep for ourselves, not for those who die; and in the present case well may we weep, for it seems as if every thing in this place had gone wrong since. Our noble Signora, the Gherardesca, was walking in this very Campo Santo, when Cassini was brought in to be deposited in earth. The shock was too much for her, she scarcely reached her own palace door, when, as I heard, she was borne in senseless; and a very few days afterwards it was said that she embarked at Leghorn with all her suite. It was natural enough that she should go away, when all her own friends, I mean of her own rank, deserted her; but I never can believe that she dismissed every servant down to the

Garzone di Credenza, and gave her palace to the care of Montescudajo—this I cannot credit; but you are come back doubtless, Signor, to set all these things to right.”

Ranieri assented silently to all this good man had said; and with a more composed spirit returned to take further counsel with himself what steps to pursue. On his way he was recognized by the populace, and there gathered round him a great multitude very shortly, each person stopping to inquire the cause of their neighbour. And Ranieri found himself so much the idol of the moment, that notwithstanding his earnest endeavours to escape, and evade the honour of their homage, they raised him on their shoulders, and carried him triumphantly to the palace of the Anziani, where they insisted upon the latter coming forth to hail the hero. At this very moment Hawkwood's troop returned from Pietra Buona, and the whole city became one scene of tumultuous revelry and joy.

As soon as Ranieri found himself once more within his palace-walls, he invited Hawkwood to become his inmate, which invitation was gladly accepted. Having delivered the letters to the magistrates, with which he was charged by Antonio de Baschi, Hawkwood eagerly sought the Lanfreducci, and inquired with much agitation of manner if he knew aught of the young soldier Edoardo.

“Something I do know,” said Ranieri, “but he made me the confidence of these facts, under promise that I should not divulge them, and I do not feel myself at liberty therefore to do so; but one thing I must tell you is, that I am truly happy he is not here at present, for it was but the other night they were burning him in effigy.”

“How so?” demanded Hawkwood.

Ranieri related the facts which had come to his knowledge on this point.

“If,” rejoined Hawkwood, “certain papers that I am become possessed of are genuine, (and I can have but little doubt they are so) that same Edoardo is a being most dear to my affections.” Hawkwood then went on to say, that though he had been acquainted with Ranieri so short a time, he felt as though he had known him all his life. “In fact,” said he, “my heart goes with you, and I wish to ask you if you are willing to receive a confidence I am desirous to make you, and if you will promise to assist me with your advice—perhaps with your power.”

“In like manner I too feel persuaded,” replied Ranieri, “that an English knight cannot make any demand that would be unseemly for me to grant ; and I accept with pleasure the honour of the trust you repose in me, with this proviso only, that I have two great duties to perform, before I can enter upon any other engagement ;—my mother and the Marchesa

Gherardesca claim my first care ; once I have ascertained their safety, my services are at your command ; in the meantime, if I can be of any use in giving you counsel, or otherwise assist you, I pledge myself to do so."

"It is enough ; I accept your offer, and I trust to your kindness. Know then, that the very night on which you left Pietra Buona, a stranger brought me a casket, offering it me for sale, together with its contents. It was of curious workmanship, and the more so to me, from being evidently wrought in England. I was, however, about to refuse becoming the purchaser, not knowing how to carry such things about in my wandering life, when the man in whose possession it was bade me look only at its contents : I did so ; and English characters presented themselves to my view. In some places the writing was effaced, but enough remained to excite in me the greatest inte-

rest. I ran hastily over two or three of the letters, and my extreme agitation was not unmarked by the man who offered them me for sale. His demand became exorbitant; but I could not hesitate; I paid him the money down; and, in my haste to possess myself of the treasure, I totally forgot to detain the vender of these papers, until such time as I had examined by what means they fell into his power. When I did recollect this, though I sent after him in all directions, he was no where to be found, and hitherto my researches to procure tidings of him have been fruitless. You, who have a noble heart, will enter into my feelings, when you have perused these papers. I cannot dwell longer upon the subject at present; the discovery they make is too recent, the matter too painful:—there—there—take them—read them. I will return when you have finished their perusal, to ask you for

counsel and for succour." Ranieri received the deposit with that feeling of interest which it was not difficult to excite in so generous a breast ; and having commanded not to be interrupted, he sat down to the examination of the papers.

CHAPTER III.

ILDEGARDA FLIES.

This world is all a fleeting show,
For man's illusion given ;
The smiles of joy, the tears of woe,
Deceitful shine, deceitful flow,
There's nothing true but Heaven.

Moore.

It may be remembered, that when Ildegarda heard of the death of her friend, and immediately afterwards witnessed the placard which set a price on the head of Edoardo, she was overcome with these repeated shocks, and was conveyed into her palace in a state of insensibility. On recovering, she endeavoured calmly to review these events, and although life and death are removed beyond mortal power in their *first* cause, she adverted to the dreadful possibility of Cas-

sini's having been cut off by sinister means : that this had been so, she scarcely doubted ; and that he had died for her sake, was now the melancholy conviction which fastened upon her mind.

“ He was my firm friend : that was enough to procure him deadly hatred. I bless Heaven that I allowed Rachaela to go to the Lanfreducci with her ; at least she is safe. But her poor brother Edoardo, he is persecuted to the death ; why did I ever insist upon his coming to me ? I have been cruelly to blame ; obstinately wilful. I have much to repent of ; and while I fancied myself pursuing a career of purity and of glory, I have been drawing down destruction on all I loved or valued. This must be so no longer ; I will redeem the past, inasmuch as it can be redeemed ; but who will restore Cassini to life ? who will give me back the means of doing good, which I once possessed, had those means been used with discretion ? In the lavish

thoughtlessness of power, I have squandered the blessings which Providence assigned to me; I have disdained counsel; I have forgotten the hand that bestowed those blessings." Ildegarda wept in bitterness of soul. Montescudajo entered her apartment with hasty steps, and without any ceremony, drew a chair near hers, and thus addressed her:—

"This is no time for compliment. You once favoured me with marks of esteem, and whatever your subsequent conduct may have been, my heart will not suffer me to forget this; in return I can repay the debt. Be it known to you, that it is the intention of the Anziani this very night to make you a prisoner."

Ildegarda started. "Impossible!" she said.

"Look at this," was his reply, and he showed her the legal instrument which was to enforce her detention.

"I have done nothing against the State, nothing against any individual; half the popula-

tion of Pisa will rise in arms to prevent such injustice. Am I not a citizen of the Republic? shall I not be guarded by its laws?"

“ Signora, the framers of laws can suspend, nay sometimes annul them ; but, in the present case, you mistake entirely the ground on which you rest your trust. The population of Pisa are your greatest enemies; for they conceive you leagued with their foes. The loss of Volterra they ascribe to *your* interference, and the vagabond Scaramuccio has a price set upon his head, as being a spy, bribed alternately by different parties, or individuals, to effect whatever nefarious purposes or notorious crimes they may have in view. Suffer me, Signora, to assure you, for this last time, that your great imprudence has involved you in a terrible situation, and although I still retain my firm belief in the purity of your intentions, I cannot consider you free from blame. The persons who have frequented your palace, to the exclusion of all others, parti-

cularly those whose faith militates against the religion of the country ; your own free and inconsiderate speech and demeanour, and, in addition to these glaring improprieties, the countenance and protection you afforded to two beings whose very birth is involved in obscurity, are all circumstances which have given a colour to the malice of enemies, from which even your friends cannot entirely exonerate you. You cannot suppose me otherwise than interested in your welfare, when you must be conscious that I make this communication at the risk of losing the place I hold under government, and of incurring the displeasure of all my own relatives."

Pafetta paused, and Ildegarda appeared doubtful how to reply ; at length, she said—

" Is this our boasted liberty of conscience ?—this our freedom ?—That a harmless woman may not see what society she chooses, may not encourage the arts she loves, may not dilate her own being by mixing with those superior to

herself and endeavouring to become something beyond the frivolous of her own sex, who are either mewed up within a convent's prison walls to worship carved images, or else who lead a life of inglorious flattery while their personal charms exist, and are cast aside with the short-lived hour of beauty, to linger in ignorant obscurity? and is it a crime not to be like one of these? Then go and tell your governors that if it is for *such* reasons they imprison me, I am proud to wear my chains." These were nearly the same words in which she had before addressed him—misfortune had not then subdued her.

Pafetta augured a different issue to his scheme; but when he saw the still dauntless spirit he had to deal with, he tried another and more vulnerable point of attack.

"I repeat that I believe you conceive yourself to be guiltless of all evil intention, but that is not enough: and, even if you brave imprisonment and death on your *own* account, you

would not surely wish to draw down such penalties on those you love? Ranieri is considered as your accomplice, and whatever lenity might be shown to a woman, a man would pay the forfeit of treason with his life."

Ildegarda grew deadly pale; her attempt at utterance failed; but, after a moment's pause, she said with vehemence—

"No, no, they *dare* not."

Pafetta again rejoiced he saw his success.

"Perhaps they dare not *openly*," he said; "but in all governments you well know there are persons ready to catch at a word dropped by chance, as it may seem, and to act thereupon. Thus much I throw out for your consideration: if you decide upon leaving Pisa, while yet it is in your power, inform me, and I will give you every assistance."

Ildegarda's fears for Ranieri quite overcame her; she hesitated in replying, and her colour went and came as her emotion increased.

“ If you are sincere,” she said at length, “ I thank you, and my gratitude is warmly yours. I will think over the subject of your discourse, and in a few hours will send you a reply.”

Paſetta took his leave, saying, “ Remember this very night you will be a prisoner, and then my power is cancelled.”

When the Gherardesca found herself alone, she remained for a while like one stupefied.

“ Cassini, good invaluable friend, what would I give for your advice in this trying hour ! If the spirits of the departed are suffered to influence mortals, oh ! let me now have some touch of thy pure essence to descend upon me, and guide my resolve ; but I am now alone—alone without one friend to look to for consolation in this earth ! Formerly the good nurse, true to her privileges, appeared in moments of grief and trouble, to comfort or amuse ; Rachaela’s soft voice was wont to soothe her mistress’s ear ; the faithful Bruno

Grillo was at hand to obey her commands ;— but now not one friend, not one faithful servant, not one, except Maestrillo !” Still, to minds properly directed, there remains always a rock of trust, that never fails those who rely upon it faithfully. Ildegarda sought that divine aid, and sought it not in vain : she determined to deserve the Lanfreducci’s esteem, if she could not gain her affection, and with a strengthened although a wounded spirit, she addressed the following letter to her :—

“ TO ERMENEGILDA.

“ I find myself involved in trouble ; I am no longer the being whose proud pre-eminence of wealth and power might have made her alliance desirable to the greatest of the laud : these advantages are likely to be wrested from me, and those who adhere to my fortunes will probably share my downfall. Under this impression I feel myself called upon to

retire from my country, and to resign the society of all most dear to me. I need not inform the Signora Lanfreducci of the tie which subsisted between her son, and her who now writes to dissolve this tie—for the present—it may be for ever. I here solemnly assure the Signora, until such time as my honours and possessions are established on a firm basis, above all until such time as the Lanfreducci shall herself confirm and sanction her son's choice, Ildegarda will never see or hold communion with him more. May his glory be unsullied—his happiness unobscured! and may no blighting influence mar the felicity of that maternal and filial union which Ildegarda venerates, and which she would sooner die than be the cause of violating! all she asks is, that this letter may be sent or shown to Ranieri, and that he may thoroughly understand he was never more dear to Ildegarda, than at the moment when she thus tears herself from him.

“ Ildegarda bequeaths to the Lanfreducci one whom she considers as her dearest child, her Rachaella, with perfect confidence that the Contessa will not refuse or neglect so precious a deposit, until *the day* arrives (if ever it does arrive) when she can with safety to that loved one reclaim her as her own. In the meanwhile, the jewels that accompany this letter are designed for her use.

“ That all good gifts may be showered upon the house of Lanfreducci, and those most dear to her, is the sincere prayer of

ILDEGARDA.”

The Gherardesca added to this letter a paper by which she left all her possessions in the care and at the disposal of Ermenegilda. When the motive which dictated this resolve was taken, a calm came over the mind of Ildegarda which nothing but the consciousness of perfect rectitude of conduct ever imparts. She could now arrange her affairs, and consider whither

she should bend her wandering footsteps ; and although separated from, or forsaken by, all she loved, she could still maintain a certain contentment of spirit, which places those who possess it on a throne from which nothing earthly can depose them.

“ Maestrillo,” said Ildegarda, “ thou wilt, I know, faithfully execute the last commission I may ever have it in my power to give thee. Take this letter to the Signora Lanfreducci, and obtain for thyself, if it be possible, a place in her suite. But I leave thee not dependant on the will or caprice of any one ; here is gold for thee sufficient to put thee beyond the reach of fortune ; only be wary and loiter not, but fulfil my bidding swiftly.”

“ Or ere the words are cold out of your mouth it shall be done. But, honoured Signora, your poor fool will be nobody else’s fool. No, no, he is wise enough to know, that what is a good trade in one place, is a bad trade in

another. But, Illustrissima, though you send me away, it is not for ever—is it?” and the concern painted on his countenance was not to be doubted or misunderstood.

“I hope not,” answered Ildegarda, with emotion.

“It is bad enough,” he rejoined, “that every one of your friends and attendants should be absent; but your poor fool may surely stay, and wipe the dust off your shoes. Heigh oh! what would I give now that my little nutcracker Bruno Grillo were but here? any one in whom my honoured mistress was wont to place confidence, would be welcome to Maestrillo. I would even go to the moon to fetch them in this hour of need, for *it is* an hour of need, is it not, Signora?” looking in her face.

“Good Maestrillo, ask me no questions, for I have no heart to answer thee. Be faithful to thy trust, depart and be happy.”

“Well, Signora, there are merry fools, and

witty fools, and pretty fools in the world ; but, by my sceptre and crown, there never was so wretched a fool as poor Maestrillo. Do not send him from thee, Illustrissima,” and he caught her garment ; “do not, I beseech thee.”

Ildegarda was moved to tears. “It is of consequence,” she said, “that the letter I now give thee be delivered safely : I have no one to whom I can entrust it but yourself. You would not disoblige me, Maestrillo ? I hope we may meet again.”

“Ah ! Signora, wherever you may be, your poor servant will surely find you out ; he will seek for you all the world over, and serve you whether you be in poverty or in prosperity ; but since you command that I should leave you, I do so, though it is with grief of heart.”

“You will return, I trust ; Maestrillo, look forward to that day.”

“*E` meglio un uovo oggi, che domani una gallina*, you know, Illustrissima,” replied he.

“I will not dispute with thee, Maestrillo. Perhaps so; but at present we must part. Take this, and this”—giving him the letter and the purse. “Speed thee on thy way, and mayest thou be happy!”

He kissed the hem of her garment, and departed, sobbing like a child. The rest of her arrangements were quickly made: she rewarded her household liberally; she wrote a note to Montescudajo, requesting passports to Florence; from thence she determined to choose her own way, unknown, if possible, to him or any one. And now she hastily traversed her desolate palace, to look at it, perhaps, for the last time. The reflection of her own mind was imaged in every object, and sadness and dismay appeared to surround her footsteps with visionary forms, which not even the brilliant sunshine could dispel. Suddenly a peal of bells rang joyfully from every convent and every church. “It is in mockery,” she said, “of my distress;” and

throwing open one of the casements, she looked out on the street, and listened to the busy hum of the populace who were passing to and fro. And now came long processions, as far as the eye could see, of priests and nuns. Flowers were strewed, and hymns were sung. It was the *festa* of St. Ranieri, the patron saint of the city :—it was his *festa* who had promised on that very day to be at her feet ;—but he was not arrived ; no letter even had ever reached her from him : she was then totally forgotten, abandoned, left to her despair ! “ And is it for one who has thus forsaken me,” she said, “ that I am about to become an outcast exile from my country ? Oh ! yes, with joy I give up all things, if by so doing I leave him at liberty to pursue his fortunes ; and since my affection appears to have been baneful to all I love, let me at least hope, that by removing my ill-fated presence, I may restore to them that peace of which I seem to have deprived them.”

The chaunt of choristers now rose upon her ear ; and there was an image of the saint at Ildegarda's palace door, before which they stopped, when the music ceased. The prayer was said ; but Ildegarda's heart responded in purer worship, and with more intense devotion, as she too dropped upon her knees, and looked up to that cerulean sky, in which she beheld a truer emblem of divinity, than any formed by the hands of men. Thus strengthened for the cruel trial she had to undergo, she hastily wrapped a mantle round her, darted with lightning footsteps down her wide magnificent staircase, and passing out at a back door, to avoid being recognized, awaited at a small *alberga*, on the road to Florence, till the shades of evening should allow her to journey unobserved.

When Ildegarda mounted the humble litter which was prepared for her, the extreme beauty of the night, and of all around, seemed to solicit her to change her resolution, and not

forsake the land of her fathers. The Arno was coursing along in its glittering attire of moonlight ; one side of the streets brilliant with its beams, the other in deep shadow : all was serene in nature. At intervals, a single figure moved noiselessly along, as if respecting the quiet of the hour ; but the sadness of Ildegarda's mind associated mystery and dark forebodings with these natural objects ;—it is a sorcery we involuntarily practise, when we are impressed with mournful sensations, and it is one of potent spell. Gradually, however, she became soothed and reconciled with herself, for she was conscious that the step she had taken was one of self-denial, and made in integrity of heart.

When we yield to the indulgence of our wishes, we are frequently disappointed in the fruition of our joys ; but when we practise abnegation of self for the real or supposed benefit of others, we are seldom or ever disappointed in the result :—and after the first fluctuating throbs of love and doubt were passed away, Ildegarda proved

that a calm serenity is the reward of such high principles. Drawing aside the curtains of her litter, she became able to enjoy the beautiful scenery through which she was passing, viewed as distinctly in that clear moonlight, as though it were lighted by the beam of day. The low hills that branch off from the Apennines, descend gracefully into the plain, conveying the eye, in gentle and pleasing gradation, from the bold outline of the parent mountains into the rich and fertile champaign country. The Arno winds its way in graceful courses through the plain, and the beautiful grey oxen, now white in the silvery light of the moon, lay supine in repose in the midst of those pasturages, of which they constituted the appropriate ornament. This landscape escaped monotony, by much inequality of broken fore-ground, and several gentle ascents. On one of these stood a convent, dedicated to St. Brunone, and here Ildegarda halted for the night. The sisterhood received her as a person they had

been expecting, and in a clean but humble cell, without attendance, without homage, without luxury, Ildegarda, the child of wealth and power, was glad to lay her weary limbs to rest. Nor was her sleep less sweet for the absence of these extraneous advantages; soundly and long she slept; and when she opened her eyes the next morning, she had some difficulty in recalling to her recollection where she was. The clean white-washed wall, the crucifix its only ornament, the single chair, the absence of every luxury, soon brought her to a sense of her present situation. The first moments were painful; every great change produces a revulsion of the feelings, which, even in occasions of pleasurable kind, cannot be called happiness; happiness is much more sober in its real form than we are apt at first to suppose it to be—

“ Oh lesson hard to learn, 'till age hath made man
wise.”

And Ildegarda first acknowledged this to be the case, as she opened her small casement at the convent of St. Brunone, and looked out at the scene which Nature displayed. Immediately beyond the walls of the sanctuary some fine trees rose in noble masses from a broken bank of the richest-coloured earth; further on still, she recognized, with something like the feeling of old acquaintance, the very peculiar rocks that were evidently the models from which Orcagna and Buffelmaco had copied those they depicted on the walls of the Campo Santo. Nature was so much the directress and instigator of these primary geniuses, that they sometimes had recourse to her in her least seducing forms, rather than allow their pencils to wanton in untruth. Nor were they mistaken; Nature, in all her moods, throughout the vast chain which links inanimate with animated beings, possesses a power, and newness of material, that no man-

nerism can ever attain. It is the great storehouse, from whence the true painter and true poet can alone derive the precious treasures of their respective arts. Such were the reflections which Ildegarda made; and in making them she was cheated into forgetfulness of the more immediate interests of her life. The bustling hospitality of the nuns allowed her not to rest long in this calm reflective mood. When, in return for all their civility, she paid them a compliment on the beauty of the site of their convent, they laughed with unconscious apathy of feeling at these praises, as they would have done at a child's observation, and talked of the precious relics of some saint's bones, which they wished to show her, with wondrous fervour of expression and gesture. It made Ildegarda melancholy to witness such perversion of sentiment:—to remain indifferent and insensible to the works of the Creator, yet enthusiastic about the mouldering remnants of mortality,

appeared to her to be the sad consequence of that false system of things which kept her country in a state of debasement.

As soon as she could escape from the garrulous nonentity of the sisterhood, she continued her journey, and arrived at Florence in safety. While in the act of travelling, it seems as if the mind, together with the body, were hurried along to the exclusion of any distinct feeling; but arrived at a particular point, set down to rest, it awakens to its full perception of joy or woe, and retires to greater intenseness of concentration within itself, from the strangeness and variety of outward objects. She saw around her unknown faces, an unknown country, which, beautiful as it was, gave back no endearing sensation to her recollection; and she felt that loneliness of heart, which being transplanted to another soil cannot fail of producing, even when under circumstances very different to those which made the exiled Ildegarda a melancholy

wanderer. Of all the beauteous objects which courted her attention, the Arno afforded her the greatest pleasure; it seemed as if hurrying on to her native place, and its murmurs were like the loved voices of those she might hear no more.

“ Did I do wisely in leaving Pisa?”—she asked herself this question an hundred times; and now she repented the step she had taken,—and now again, when reflecting upon the possibility of her presence there being dangerous to Ranieri’s interests, and possibly to his personal safety, she became once more reconciled to banishment.

How can any one doubt of the existence of the soul in a future state, when it is so often in this world separated from its terrestrial companion—the body? and when the recognition is strong within us, that we are existing, as it were, in one place, while all our life of life is in another. So felt the Gherardesca, as she ever

sought the river's side, and lingered dreaming for hours upon its banks, without coming to any resolution for her future plans.

“ Why should I go further ?” she said ; “ why add distance to distance from my native Pisa ?”

She dreaded to encounter that desolating feeling, when every pace of the horse that conveys us away seems to tear asunder the affections more and more from the point to which they are bound. To be fixed at any given spot of distance, robs that distance of somewhat of its vague indefinite horror ; but the act of adding to it step by step, rood by rood, can alone be felt in all its anguish by those who, like Ildegarda, have voluntarily banished themselves from all they love. The only reason which induced her to change her present abode was a misgiving of her mind in respect to the confidence she ought to place in Pafetta. “ I had rather (she thought) be in some place unknown to him, unknown to the whole world, till I can

return to my country—and certainly I would far rather live any where than remain within the power of Montescudajo.”

When this idea, with all its possible evils, once obtained a place in her mind, it converted her dislike of going, into so great an anxiety to fly further away, that she could not rest till she had made the necessary arrangements for her removal. She travelled under the assumed name of a German Countess journeying for her health, and procured other attendants to wait upon her, dismissing those who had accompanied her from Pisa. The alarm which she had taken respecting Montescudajo's intentions in regard to herself, occasioned a new ground for suspicion, which made her conscious of a species of pleasure, in determining to remove further from his power ; and all unwillingness of going further away from her native place, was lost in this consideration. Arrived at Siena, she found

a residence that was entirely suited to her views, and she determined to fix her abode there.

It seems as though Italy had been destined by Providence to be divided and parcelled out in different portions, as if the whole being united in one undivided country would render it a too peculiarly favoured nation ; for every different state and province is marked by a striking variety unknown to the others. Nor can this variety be ascribed to the nature of their differing government alone ; since it exists in the climate, in the produce of the earth, and in the physical being of the inhabitants. Ildegarda observed this distinction with great interest ; yet still at Siena she did not lose, in the scenery around her, the leading linking characteristics of her native Pisa, and she loved it the more for that resemblance.

Ildegarda's residence was situated at a small distance from the walls of the town, immediately

on the high road to Florence : it was a large low brick building, forming three parts of a square. But let it not be imagined that an English brick-built house bears any analogy with edifices formed of similar *materiel* in Italy ; there is a rich mellowness in the colouring of the Italian brick, not to mention the architecture, which places them at an immeasurable distance. In front of this mansion was an unusual beauty in Italy, a piece of fine green sward, on which the inhabitants of the town placed so high a value, that they came out of an evening to visit it, as though it were an object worthy of homage ; here they met, here they convened to eat ice, make love, and enjoy *il dolce far niente*. From this spot was to be seen a beautiful undulating country, alternately grey with the tint of the olive, or vivid with the purple colouring of the ripe grape, while tufts of the intense green of the ilex gave additional force to the brighter tints and harmonized with the tone of the rich red and

yellow earths from whence they sprung. Such was the north front of Ildegarda's Palazzo; but on the south side was her favourite resort. A garden shaded with high skreens of evergreens, intermingled with flowers, and casts of no ignoble sculpture, afforded her a beautiful retreat for calm repose and meditation. There was a resemblance too, (which above all, endeared it to her,) with her own garden at Volterra; and from the moment this resemblance struck her, she encouraged the feelings to which it gave birth, till they became too painful for endurance. "Once more," she said, "I will behold that dear-loved seat of my early care. One or two days at most will easily take me there; I can go with few attendants, and in disguise." This plan was no sooner formed than executed; and with a couple of men servants alone, she set forth in her litter, as if to take an evening's airing.

CHAPTER IV.

THE DEN OF THE STREGA.

“ ————— Oh ! not for mortal tear
Doth Nature deviate from her calm career,
Nor is the earth less laughing or less fair,
Though breaking hearts her gladness may not share ;
O'er the cold urn the beam of summer glows,
O'er fields of blood the zephyr freshly blows ;
Bright shines the sun, though all be dark below,
And skies arch cloudless o'er a world of woe,
And flowers renew'd in Spring's green pathway bloom,
Alike to grace the banquet and the tomb.”

It was a smiling cloudless day, when poor little Bruno Grillo looked out from the highest window of the Torre dei Forzzati, envying the birds as they flitted past his prison grate. In addition to his own melancholy situation, the

innocent creature knew well enough that his detention was not on account of any crime which he had committed, but for some cause connected with his mistress, the Gherardesca ; as the letter destined for her had been taken from him, when he was attacked on his way back from Volterra, and overcome by numbers. The faithful Bruno Grillo mourned over this conviction with grief of heart, and vainly formed schemes to make known to her the fate of the parcel with which Ranieri had entrusted him : at length, he devised a plan, of which he had good hope of success.

The prisoners made various toys and ingenious ornaments, which they lowered in baskets to the passengers from their windows, and sold for their own benefit. Bruno Grillo thought of cutting out several figures in wood, representing himself, and marking them with his name : these he placed in one of the baskets, such as were used by the other Forzzati,

and he accompanied it with a request to any charitable passer-by, to take it to the Palazzo Gherardesca.

It was on one of the days, when the prisoners were permitted to adopt this means of selling their merchandize, and at the hour when they made the air resound with their screams and howlings, entreating for the love of Heaven, the passers-by would take pity on them, and carry their goods to the houses of the great and opulent, that Bruno Grillo ventured his basket together with the others ; but unfortunately (as he deemed it) it became entangled in its descent, and struck against one of the grated windows, which, because it was nearer the ground, was defended with iron spikes, and on one of these Bruno Grillo's treasures rested. The occupier of that cell contrived to pass his arm through the grating, and draw the contents inward. In vain poor Bruno Grillo screamed, and stamped, and roared, with sorrow and vexation ; the uni-

versal noise which pervaded every part of the Torre at that hour was such, that no one voice could be distinguished from the universal yell which issued from that dreadful place. The unfortunate Bruno sat down on his straw, and wept bitterly ; but he was not long sunk in this despair, when he started up at hearing the bolts of his prison drawn, and beheld, not his jailor, but Pranzetti, the once favourite servant of Montescudajo. He was about to exclaim with unrepressed delight on seeing the face of a friend, when the former made signs to him to be silent, and having carefully shut the door, he said,

“ Listen, my good Bruno Grillo ; my master has imprisoned me without cause, at least without assigning any cause to me ; and I have sworn a great oath never to pardon him. Day nor night will I rest, till I have vengeance. I know of one who can help me to the means—thou knowest him too ; wilt thou lead me to him ? for I have heard thou wert intimate with Edoardo,

when thou wert in the service of the Marchesa Gherardesca. Now, dost thou know where Buonajuto dwells, and wilt thou lead me to him? If thou wilt render me this service, I will assist thee with means to escape from hence, provided thou hast courage to brave the danger which thou *must* dare, in order to effect thy purpose."

Bruno hesitated a moment in replying; for the vindictive fury expressed more forcibly in Pranzetti's gestures and countenance, even than by his words, against Montescudajo, made him averse to owe his liberty to such a man. "Still," he thought, "I can easily get away from him when once I am free, and, it may be, even prevent his intended crime. Then the idea of being free overpassed all other considerations, and he said,

"Dare! I will dare any thing rather than rot in this dungeon; and I think I can aid in conducting thee to Buonajuto."

“ It is well then ; a bargain, my brave boy,” and he clenched his hand.

“ It is lucky for thee that thy merchandize fell into my possession, otherwise I should never have known thou wast here ; but the puppets with the hunched backs told thy tale for thee ; and, both because I have a favour towards thee, and also that thou mayest help me, I am come to offer thee thy liberty on the above condition. The principal jailor is sick, and my own brother happens to be employed to fill his place this night ; he will not absolutely aid us to escape, but he will not prevent us, if we can devise any plausible means by which he may account for our having done so, without implicating him directly in the business. As to your passing down the spiral staircase, which runs through the middle of the tower, that is impossible ; because, on account of the other Forzzati, the various doors which secure its entrance must be shut at

the usual hour, and cannot be opened again without making sufficient noise to awaken every prisoner in the place; but if you have courage to lower yourself down in a basket by means of these pulleys and ropes which I now bring you, I will be waiting in a boat below, and receive you safely."

Bruno Grillo did not hesitate.

"There's my brave Ragazzo," was Pranzetti's reply.

"Yet stay," cried Bruno Grillo; "how can I go off, and basely desert my mistress? I must, indeed I must, find some method of telling her how I was waylaid and half murdered before they got the Lanfreducci's letter from me."

"You may do so, but you cannot fulfil your intention at Pisa, for she has left it, and is gone no one knows whither."

"Ildegarda gone!" cried Bruno Grillo; "and

who has the care of her palace? I must go and see to it."

"Idiot!" cried Pranzetti, interrupting him, "what canst thou do? My master, ill luck go with him! has provided for her, take my word for that; and the only chance you have of knowing any thing about the matter, is, by returning whither thou camest,—to Ranieri. But enough of all this—I have no time to lose in words: wilt thou go with me, or not? decide quickly, I can wait no longer."

"I will, I do not hesitate: what has poor Bruno Grillo to do now that his beloved mistress is gone, but to go likewise?"

Then he received from Pranzetti the necessary implements for his escape; the latter assisted him to fasten the rope to the iron grating of his window, bade him be of good cheer, and promised him, that in the dead of night, his boat would be stationed beneath at the

turret's base, carrying a small light at her stern, whereby he might distinguish her from any other. Matters being thus adjusted between them, poor Bruno had nothing to do during the intervening hours, but reflect on the miserable fate of his dear mistress, who had probably fallen a prey to Montescudajo.

“And my poor mother, too,” he cried aloud, “what will she do? she has most likely already become a sacrifice to my loss, and that of her dear honoured Ildegarda. The affectionate Bruno's heart was overwhelmed with grief, and he awaited the hour for his intended escape, with a sad presage that it was never to take place. At length he heard the convent bells ringing for midnight prayers, and his eye was fixed on the river watching for the signal light. Glimmering like a speck, he beheld it at a distance, but every now and then it was hid from his view by intervening barks. Still it approached, grew more visible, and at length

lay to, under the prison walls. Without a moment's hesitation, Bruno Grillo placed himself in his basket, and pushing it off the ledge of the window on which it was poised, he loosed the running noose of his cord, and dropped down with the rapidity of lightning; but, just a moment ere he reached the boat, the fastening of the ropes gave way, the basket swung to one side, and off went the unfortunate Bruno Grillo into the Arno. The sudden noise of his plunging into the river, and the hasty cry uttered by Pranzetti, awoke many of the wretched inmates of the prison, who vociferated unceasing cries of "An Escape! an Escape!" but the jailor could not, and would not awake, and Bruno Grillo was saved by the exertions of Pranzetti, who contrived to haul him into the boat, when, tossing him a sailor's garment, which chanced to be there, he left him to recover the best he might, then loosed his sail to the breeze; and, as both wind and tide were in his

favour, the light bark flew rapidly along the stream.

Thus they got clear of the city ; then running her aground, they leaped on shore, and by unfrequented roads reached that which leads to Pietra Buona, whither Bruno Grillo conducted Pranzetti to join Buonajuto. Here, however, they learnt, to the infinite grief of Bruno Grillo, that Ranieri had set off the evening before to return to Pisa ; and, as to Buonajuto, he had taken the old road that led to Leghorn. This information was exceedingly counter to the wishes of both ; but Pranzetti having obtained a purchaser for his papers in Hawkwood, thought it most prudent to be off immediately, and not satisfy any inquiries that might be made of the way in which he had become master of them. To this end he commanded Bruno Grillo to follow him immediately, and in return for having procured him release from prison, said that he expected him to assist

in discovering Buonajuto, whom it was necessary that he should see. Poor Bruno Grillo, who thought only of obtaining tidings of his mother and Ildegarda, readily agreed, conceiving that no person was more likely to fulfil his wishes in this respect than the clever Buonajuto; they therefore pursued their way to Leghorn. Leghorn was not, as it now is, a large and populous place: a few scattered houses; a few large buildings, the resort of traffickers of doubtful character; a port which was sought more by vessels in distress than by any others; some Locandas of wretched appearance, and the resort of still more wretched company: such was Leghorn. A forest of immense extent, and dangerous from the asylum it afforded to evil-disposed persons, lay between it and Pisa; the roads that conducted thither were almost impassable: this was the character and description of the place at which Bruno Grillo and his companion arrived. The crew of a zebeck, just

landed from Genoa, were in possession of a large fire at the Locanda, which the cold of the season now rendered a most desirable object; and they were discoursing about the storm of the preceding night, and declaring that they had very nigh shot past the entrance into the harbour.

“This flat coast is enough to deceive a hawk’s eye,” cried one of the men; “and I do believe if it had not been for the amulet *La Gran Strega di Toscana* gave me the last time I set sail, I should never have caught the narrow mouth which brought us into this snug birth.”

“Ah!” cried the *Padrone di Casa*, “you had better take good care of that same amulet, for she lies now at the point of death in her den hard by, and never will she do any more good or harm in this world; but she has got the young one with her, I am told, and a pretty sight of knowledge will she bequeath to him.”

“Well,” rejoined another voice, “I would

not have her knowledge, no, not to be master of all the vessels in the harbour of Genoa ; but I doubt that she will require that, and more besides, to save her young cub, for there is a price set upon his head, I am told."

"The greater the shame," cried all the boat's crew at once, "for Buonajuto has done more good than half the captains in Italy."

"A thousand golden sequins are offered to the man who will take him alive or dead to Montescudajo," rejoined the first speaker ; "and if I could get any body to join me, I would not wait long before I attempted to gain the reward."

"You deserve to be tied to our bowsprit, and left to cool there during a night's sail, for such a speech ;" and the whole party hooted at and threatened him with their vengeance if ever they heard such a sentiment again. Pranzetti and Bruno Grillo listened with great interest to this discourse ; and, as soon as the rest of the

party retired for the night, they wrapt their cloaks around them, and, heedless of the cutting wind, determined to seek Marinella's abode ; Pranzetti, with a firm belief in the oracular power of mother and son, and Bruno Grillo in the more rational one, that Buonajuto could give him tidings of those most dear to him,—a belief not altogether untinged with a credence in their supernatural endowments. Pranzetti had observed a good-natured bustling girl about the house ; and to her they addressed themselves, in order to gain information where Marinella lived.

“ If you like,” she said, “ I will readily show you the way myself, for Marinella is a kind friend to me ; she has often sold a good wind to my brother Giuseppe, when he sailed for Genoa ; and, provided you are as you say, really her friends, I shall like to take you to her ; it may please her, before she dies, to see you.”

“We are indeed her friends, and have tidings of consequence to bear to her.”

“Surely you speak the truth,” said the girl, “for it is a cutting cold night, and nothing but great hatred or great love could make any one brave it. Now then,” looking around to see that they were unobserved, “for,” as she said, “they have enemies in our house, to whom I would not, on any account, discover their abode: now then, if you will follow me, make haste, for I must be back to serve the guests as soon as possible.”

It was a brilliant starlight, and every object was as distinctly seen as in the middle of day: sharp and hard their outline came upon the eye; the long and trembling rays, which were reflected in the sea, seemed to unite the world of waters with the canopy of the Heavens. Bruno Grillo and Pranzetti pursued their way almost at the ocean's edge; the weeds were crisp beneath their feet, and the coldness

of the air entered their very eye-lids. Still they walked on, and nothing was to be seen like hut or habitation: the sea and the land melted into one, and the ground they trod appeared to be a degree flatter than the ocean, so visible was the circular zone of the horizon where it intersected the terrestrial ball.

“How much further have we to go?” asked Pranzetti.

“Do you see that low black ridge of rocks?” said Paolina; “there is Marinella’s hut.”

“Impossible!” cried they.

“It is so, though,” she said, “and five minutes more will bring us to it.”

Now they reached a small sandy bay, through the middle of which flowed a narrow but deep river.

“Keep to the left,” said their conductress. They did so, and arrived at some broad stones, which were just visible above the water. Paolina stepped lightly over these, and

they found themselves at the door of a cabin, scarcely to be distinguished from a low reef of rocks which ran into the sea. They knocked.

“It is I,” said Paolina, “and two friends.”

Edoardo looked out from a hole in the roof, and immediately recognized Bruno Grillo: in a few minutes the door was opened, and Edoardo affectionately embraced him.

“Messer Pranzetti too! to what do I owe the honour of this visit?”

Edoardo now appeared in his accustomed rags, and forgot not to practise his old trick of affected blindness. From the light of some billets of timber which lay blazing on a stone in the middle of the hut, they could distinguish dimly through the smoke, which only found vent through the same hole in the roof out of which Edoardo had examined his guests, the curious nature of the place in which they were. The walls partly formed of sand-stone, and partly of pieces of wrecked vessels, were thickly

studded over with painted figures, rudely carved, of men and animals; here and there a shell and a branch of coral, together with the skeletons of a peculiar kind of fish, added to their decoration; several garments, apparently those of sea-faring men, hung from different pegs fastened in the wall, and made a sort of drapery to the other objects. Pranzetti looked at all these things with great reverence; for he regarded them as so many insignia of the power of Marinella and her offspring. While he was making his remarks to Paolina, Bruno Grillo was anxiously inquiring what news of his mistress and of his friends in Pisa, and was very sadly disappointed when he found that Edoardo was ignorant of all that had passed at Pisa since his departure from thence, and now heard with grief of heart the melancholy tidings.

“What is that you are talking of?” cried the sharp whistling voice of Marinella. Edoardo drew aside a curtain which had hitherto con-

cealed her from their view, and, addressing her, said, “Behold an old friend;—here is little Bruno, and at the other end of our house is no less a person than Messer Pranzetti.”

“Welcome, Bruno, thou art one
I am pleased to gaze upon ;
Ere my weary task was o’er,
Well I knew thou’dst cross my door,
And aid me to wind up the clue,
Which thou alone hast power to do :
Black and white, and fearful red,
Are the colours of my thread,
But time and toil and suffering may
Dissolve the charm, release the clay,
And foul and fair shall bring to view ;—
But this shall Bruno Grillo do.”

As Marinella uttered these rhymes with great rapidity, she looked intently on three balls of coloured yarn which she wound together with infinite dexterity. She sat on a low stool covered with a piece of richly embroidered scarlet cloth. She was attired in black, and her hair hung in its original wildness all over her person, which had returned to its hueless white. Pranzetti

approached and stood before her, unable from terror to utter a syllable.

“What dost thou want with my trembling limbs and bleached visage?” asked Marinella peevishly.

“I want to know, if it pleases your highness, —that is, *Illustrissima*, I would fain have your counsel, what I ought to do in order to obtain vengeance on Montescudajo for imprisoning me without cause?—I who always served him faithfully.”

Marinella arose, and fixed her usually restless eyes, with a singular expression of fierce delight, upon the speaker.

“Bless me!” whispered he, turning to Bruno Grillo, “she is not at all like Buonajuto’s mother whom I saw at Pisa;” and at the same time Edoardo spoke low in Marinella’s ear.

“You seek vengeance—vengeance shall be yours,” she replied, turning to Pranzetti; “yet you must pay a price for it; but dismiss Paolina, we do not want her now.” Paolina never

questioned her commands, and returned to her Locanda.

“ Approach,” said Marinella to Pranzetti. He did so, dismay painted on his countenance. She took up the clues of yarn which she had been winding, and breaking a thread of each, she tied them round his wrist, saying,

“ I bind thee with the scarlet thread, I bind thee
with the black ;

“ Thou never more these chains shalt loose, and
their spell shall never slack,

“ Till the white thread’s woven in the loom,

“ And then the web works out thy doom.

But Marinella is not to be deceived ; there is a cause for which thy master imprisoned thee :—relate it, I command thee.” For a moment Pranzetti was silent. “ No hesitation : begone, and never again seek my presence, or answer me without prevarication.”

“ Montescudajo intercepted a letter, which Bruno Grillo was bringing to the Marchesa

Gherardesca: the instant he read that letter, I was cast into the Torre di Forzzati; but I took with me some papers, which I have good reason to believe were of great consequence, for I sold them to the English Captain Hawkwood for a great sum of money."

Marinella lifted up her arms on high, threw back her head, and remained some minutes silent; then, in a long, loud, whistling sort of scream, she cried, "'Twas bravely done! the hour is nigh when the wicked shall perish, and the truth be known: but yet there is a seal not broken, and, till the master hand arrives, none other may that *emprise* dare."

"Excuse me, Illustrissima, but I do not understand,—that is to say, I am at a loss to conceive, how these papers will revenge me for having been unjustly imprisoned."

Marinella laughed one of her fearful laughs: "True," she said, "you cannot understand that, but I can: here is, however, an instru-

ment which is more suited to your purpose ;” and she drew forth a small dagger from her breast.

Pranzetti grasped it eagerly.

“ Nay, not so,” cried Buonajuto, leaping up, and attempting to wrest it from him ; “ not so, I implore thee, Marinella.”

“ Foolish boy,” screamed the Marinella, “ cease, nor struggle against destiny ; blood calls for blood ; that dagger pierced thy father’s side.”

Edoardo was palsied with astonishment and horror, and there was a moment of silence ; then recovering, he said, “ Be then that vengeance mine, the vengeance of justice, but not of murder ; I will not suffer this for any advantage the world can give. Marinella, by all the power I ever held over thee of kind services and rich reward, I adjure, I command thee, to obtain that dagger.”

“ If it must be so, it must,” she murmured

sullenly. "Again my power is crossed, again by *thee*, ungrateful boy! Pranzetti, give it me!" and, taking the dagger from Pranzetti, she presented it to Edoardo: "May its possession fire thy spirit; but the cold north is in thy veins, and thou knowest not the fervid tide of pure Italian blood. There are other knives in the world besides this one," she added to Pranzetti, "but if thou hast patience, there will not be wanting means to hurl that traitor to destruction; in the mean time take this, and this, cutting off a piece of her lint-white hair, and folding a small ring in the same parcel with it; rest not till you have found Fredolfo, give it him, and do as he orders. Begone! I have no more to say to thee! Fulfil my bidding, and thy desire will be fulfilled. Bruno Grillo, remain, I have other work for thee."

Pranzetti took the packet, promised obedience, and gladly escaped from the presence of her, whom he both feared and believed in as a

being who could hurl him to destruction, or put him in possession of his wishes.

When Edoardo, Bruno Grillo, and La Strega were left alone, there was a pause, but the silence was broken by the flapping wing of a heavy bird that perched upon the roof of the cabin, and screamed with long and repeated cries.

“Ah !” cried Marinella, while her whole frame seemed convulsed, “there he is again ;” and holding up her hand in an attitude of defiance to the place whence the sound proceeded, she muttered some words unintelligibly ; then added distinctly, “But you have not got my carcase yet. That shall be buried fathoms deep, and the worms shall chew your meat for you, before you eat of it !”

“Compose yourself, Marinella, I beseech you ; it is only the night-bird you hear : you have been ill, and you allow your imagination to be affected.”

“Hold your tongue, young Elf, you know not of what you are talking.” Then rising up, and opening the door, she stood for some time looking at the heavens; then again knelt down, put her ear to the ground, and leaping up, suddenly struck her hands together as she exclaimed:—

“They’re coming now, they’re coming quickly,
 I hear them on the distant strand;
 Stir the fire and stir it briskly,
 Heap it high, nor spare the brand;
 Thou with a jolly crew must hie } to *Edoardo*.
 Where the Arno rolls its course:
 Thou with me must quickly fly } to *Bruno Grillo*.
 Where the ocean thunders hoarse.
 I can stay the tempest’s might,
 I can darken the starry night;
 A cockle shell will do for me
 To sail upon the trackless sea,
 And thou this night must sail with me.”

Edoardo, half provoked, half interested by this strange unsatisfactory jargon, which explained nothing of what it most concerned him to know, besought her to speak intelligibly, and said;—

“I have more gold yet in store for thee, if

thou wilt only relate to me what thou knowest of my fate ! Have I not tended thee in sickness and in health ? have I not been faithful to thee, as a child who owed to thee its being ?—Answer me, I pray thee ; keep me not in this suspense !” “ Leave Marinella to work her own way ! Have I not told thee there is a seal to break which none may break but the master-hand, before thy destiny can be revealed. I have been bribed by gold ; but the day is over, the work is done, and I go shortly where riches, such as never met mortal eye, shall be heaped around me.

“ Deep in caves of sea-weeds green,
Where the sun has never been,
There the countless treasures lie,
For which the earth’s vain minions sigh ;
Mingled with the dead men’s bones
There lie the gems and precious stones.
See the white and shining skull,
’Tis of pearls and diamonds full.
There the sporting myriads play,
That shoot athwart the bloated clay ;
And there the gorgeous jewels lie,
In mockery to the rayless eye.”

The tread of heavy footsteps interrupted Marinella's chant.

"Open to friends," said a hoarse voice at the cabin door. Edoardo hesitated.

"Obey me ! what fearest thou ? does not Marinella know what she is about ? Open, I say, quickly."

He did so, and three of the boat's crew entered, whom Bruno Grillo had seen at the Locanda.

"How are ye, Maesta ?" they said, respectfully ranging themselves before Marinella.

"What do you want ?" she cried in her shrill voice, "for the errand that brought you here was not to inquire for me, but of me."

"We are come, Illustrissima, as usual, only for a cap full of wind, and to know what luck we shall have with our merchandize at Pisa."

"'Tis well ! I will look to *thy* wants ; see thou to mine. Thou must take my son Buonajuto with thee, and guard him from all evil : there

is a price set upon his head, but he shall have the heads of those who dared propose the deed. See that ye convey him in safety to the English captain ; and whatever services Hawkwood may demand of thee, those fulfil. Here is an earnest of better reward, if thou dost what I command faithfully ;” and she took a leathern purse from her girdle. “ And here is an earnest that thus shall be done with thee if thou obey not my behests ;” so saying, she flung something in the fire, which blazed up, and for a moment produced a vapour that blinded them ; when it rolled away. The sailors kissed the hem of her robe in token of obedience.

She pulled down one of the garments that hung on the walls, desiring Buonajuto to wear it ; then she gave him something with which she desired him to anoint his hands and face, all which he did, and in a few moments reappeared in the guise of one of the sailors, whom he was to accompany.

“ Give me thine hand,” said Marinella to Edoardo, “ and thine,” to Bruno Grillo. “ Friends, follow us,” and she passed out of the cabin, and with her own swift pace took the course of the river, along the sandy bay, till they came to its mouth, which spread wide in various channels, and mingled with the sea. Drawn up on the beach a small boat lay on her side. “ Welcome,” she said, on beholding it, “ welcome, good servant—in, boy, in, thou’lt sail with me.” Bruno Grillo hesitated. “ By dawn of day, I’ll bear thee to thy mother, boy ; and there is work for thee to do thou canst not shun ; it is better to bear the yoke we must bear willingly, than strive against it, and do it after all.”

“ Marinella,” said Edoardo, “ solemnly I adjure thee, by all thy hopes here and hereafter, not to harm this lad.”

Marinella laughed long and wildly, during which the sailors fell on their knees.

“ It is thy adjuration makes me laugh,” she said ; “ yet be at rest ; Bruno Grillo is safe ; nothing shall harm him, and much shall delight him. But no doubts, no hesitation ; what are these here for, but to do my will ?” and she pointed to the sailors. “ Could I not command them to throw him into the sea, if such were my pleasure ?—it is not. Peace ! be satisfied and obey. And now, Edoardo, approach, and take my parting words.

“ Steel thy heart, and trust to none,
Rely on nought, until 'tis done.
Remember thou 'rt the child of sorrow,
And that joy's evening has no morrow.
True to my care, be fierce and brave,
And mayest thou have an honour'd grave !”

She wrapt her lean arms around him, pressed him to her, and leaped into the boat by the side of Bruno Grillo ; then loosed the sail, gave the word to the three mariners, who pushed her off the shore into deep water, and now the bark floated slowly on the measured wave.

“ The stars are flying the dawn of day,
The sail is set, I must away ;
The tide is ebbing to bear me hence ;
I see the distant shore, from whence
None ever return'd the tale to tell ;
Take my last, my long farewell !
I cannot wait, I must away,
Fare thee well !—Hurra, hurra !

The bark is rocking to and fro,
Soft on its heaving breast we go ;
Speed thee, Ocean, speed thee now,
Foam at our helm, and lash our prow ;
Bear us merrily, merrily on,
That our task may soon be done ;
Morn is coming in mantle grey,
Speed us on !—Hurra, hurra !

The morn is bright'ning, see, 'tis here,
And now its rosy hues appear !
Now my parting descants pour
Faint and fainter to the shore ;
Child of guilt and sorrow, now
Take my last fond parting vow :
Be thou happy, come what may,
Fare thee well !—Hurra, hurra !”

Marinella stood up in the bark and waved
her hands, and the sailors, on shore, echoed
“ Hurra, hurra !”

CHAPTER V.

THE NUN'S STORY.

Ye whom kind Nature gifted at your birth
With that possession which outweighs all joys,
That endless treasure which no time destroys,
Not to be bought with all the wealth on earth,
Which in this world of sin to God recalls,
And in another where no sin enthralls,
Follows our heavenly being unconfined—
Gift of a feeling heart and virtuous mind!
Look, and behold that sight!

Sotheby's Oberon.

WHEN Edoardo arrived in Pisa, he was astonished to find the whole city in a state of war-like preparation. Florence had long only waited for an apology to recommence hostilities, and on receiving accounts of the taking of the for-

tress of Pietra Buona, immediately sent Ridolfo de Varano to make incursions on the Pisan territory. This circumstance had once more turned the tide of popular feeling, and Edoardo heard himself execrated, as the cause of having drawn the country into a state of warfare: he lost no time in seeking the English Captain, and, being immediately admitted to his presence, he declared himself to him, and demanded the fulfilment of Hawkwood's promise, namely, his protection, and the honour of serving under him. At first, the latter had some difficulty in recognizing Edoardo under his present disguise of a sailor; but once assured that he did indeed behold the same creature who had been acting so glorious a part at Pietra Buona, he pressed him in his arms, and gave free course to a burst of feeling, in which the latter shared, without being able to account for the cause.

“Protect you, my brave boy! yes, with the

last of my blood and my breath, and every one that belongs to thee, at least every one who behaves well and kindly to thee : thy gallant bearing would alone merit this from me ; but I have a dearer, deeper interest in thee than the mere admiration of thy bravery. We are nearly related by the ties of consanguinity, those ties which death only can dissolve. Look up, my boy, and let me read thy noble father in thy features, as I have already done in thy actions. Yes, I cannot doubt it ;—there is the brow of the Hawkwoods, the very lineaments, the air : had I considered only these, it were enough to give assurance of that most interesting fact, to which these papers set the seal of confirmation.

“ This casket contains the wonderful story which will unfold to thee the secret of thy birth. Peruse these records, and thank that Providence which has miraculously preserved such a testimony, and placed it in my hands. I will leave thee for a while, that thine undivided attention

may be given to the interesting but heart-rending detail which I now place before thee."

With feelings which language can never express, Edoardo received the precious deposit; and having incoherently poured forth the overflowings of a heart wrought up to a state of mingled extasy and woe, he endeavoured to assume sufficient composure to examine the documents which were now lying before him. They consisted of various letters; but one packet was laid uppermost, and marked for immediate perusal: to this he applied all his attention.

LETTER I.

RACHAELLE MONTESCUDAJO TO EDWARD
HAWKWOOD.

Dated, Pisa St. Bingio detto delle
Catene di Padronato.

"There is no hope left. I besought my unrelenting parent, on my knees, not to drive me to despair: I would work to maintain myself, I said; I would leave the country for ever; I

would die, but I could not fulfil my vows ; because I should become perjured in taking oaths which my heart could not ratify. He then questioned me with that severe aspect, which strikes terror to my soul, demanding of me the reason of my rebellious resolve. I told him I was averse to a life of seclusion ; that when I had been induced to assume the probationary habit, I had seen nothing of the world, and could not judge of my own wishes or tastes ;—but that since that time, although seldom beyond my convent walls, I had felt a daily encreasing dislike to a cloistral life. In fine, I had examined myself strictly, and found I was totally unfitted to be a heavenly bride. Oh ! Edward, perhaps I gloried too much in this bold avowal, and am destined to receive chastisement for my presumption. My father spurned me from him, declared I should not disgrace his family, and commanded me to be prepared in a week's time to receive the veil. His power is great ;

the Abbess will not resist his commands; sin and wretchedness will be forced upon me, and my death will ensue."

LETTER II.

"Edward, the sacrifice is over. Why were you not ready to snatch me from this gulph of woe? Is it possible?—have you forgotten our plighted vows? are you unworthy of all I have suffered for you? and if you are, is it not better it should be thus? Am I not bound beyond mortal power to release me? The black vestment is on me—the fatal veil;—what is your love now to me? I am buried in the depths of a convent's gloom. These rebellious thoughts cover me with guilt."

Written some time after the above:—

"No, it cannot be—it cannot be, that a merciful Providence should demand of his creatures the fulfilment of vows which are forced upon them. I was wholly unconscious when the last rites were performed, which severed me for ever

from the world ; and something whispers within me that I was so, in mercy, to save me from the guilt of uttering falsehoods in the face of Heaven. Since this idea has dawned upon me, I am buoyed up with hopes of I scarcely know what, which, vague and indefinite as they are, give me back to light, and life, and joy. Yet, I implore you, deceive me not : if these suggestions are the work of the evil one, better it is to die than yield to them. To-day my father visited me in the room appointed for strangers, but the terrible grate divided us. I was within the pale of a cloister, shut out from the liberty which even the animal creation enjoy. A grating between a father and a daughter ! Edward, is that natural ? can it be the design of Heaven, or pleasing to the Creator ? Impossible. My father looked at me with those inquisitive penetrating eyes which enter the secret foldings of the heart. He congratulated me upon my improved appearance. ‘ You see,’ he said, ‘ what serenity and

bliss accompany the life you have chosen.' I was silent, but I too lifted my eyes upon him, and he understood their answer ; for he coloured, frowned, and changed the subject."

" ' Your brother Pafetta,' he said, ' sends you his kindest love. His prayers and blessings are offered up for his holy sister's felicity. Yes, Rachaelle, you have now built up the fortunes of our sinking house ; and in dedicating yourself to the service of Heaven, you have enabled your father to invest Pafetta with those honours which riches can alone support.'

" And here he expatiated with much prolix detail on the magnificence of my brother's establishment, the consideration in which he was held by the magistrates of Pisa, and the hopes which were entertained of his ultimately making a splendid marriage. I could carry on the deceit no longer ; my whole soul disavowed the justice of condemning one child to wretchedness in order to forward the fortunes of another :

and grasping the iron bars, as if my feeble strength could wrench them from their place, ‘Are these,’ I cried, a ‘parent’s sentiments? the very tiger has more compassion on its offspring. I am then immolated for the sake of worldly aggrandizement! And can you pretend to think—still less, oh! father, can you pretend to make *me* think, that such subversion of the common instincts of nature is acceptable to the Deity? No, no, this iron is less hard than the heart which can have executed so unnatural a deed.’ My father remained as one stupified: for the first time in my life had I spoken the truth to him. He moved not, spoke not; but after a few minutes’ silence, he called the portress, said some words in her ear, and left me.

“It is now many days since I have been removed to another cell. My food is brought to me. I may not even mingle with the spectral sisterhood. I am not allowed to converse with any one. The nun who serves me, crosses herself

as she enters my presence, and holds her rosary in her hands, as if to protect her against some evil spirit. My walks in the convent garden are prohibited; no books, no work, nothing to take off my thoughts from the surrounding gloom; but it is well—I am the more concentrated—I can the better go into the depths of my conscience, and discover whether this rebellion against received opinion is the dictate of reason, or the suggestion of mere passion. I have prayed too, fervently, for light upon this vital concern, and a calm at times steals over me, and confirms me in the impression that I am not guilty. Oh! the hours, the leaden hours, how long they appear! I contrast them with those few bright sunny days of existence, when there seemed not room enough in my heart to contain its joys. The flowers you brought me, the lines you wrote me, the book you bade me read—how rich I was in enjoyment! every thing was enchantment, there seemed no end to delight. Nei-

ther was there ; neither would there have been, if love and nature had not been baffled. But now, in the prime and vigour of my days, I look forward to a long array of years that lie outspread before me. Joyless, cheerless, withered years of loneliness and gloom ; my own corroding thoughts comparing what is to what might have been, and rendering my green, and otherwise blooming existence, sapless and sear.

“ No ! no ! Edward mine, this is not—cannot be *leading a religious life*. There is some dreadful mistake in all this system ; and the more I look up to Heaven for light in the obscurity, for clearance of the confusion which reigns in my troubled thoughts, the more I am convinced I have no ties which can in fact bind me to monastic vows. Have I not always declared my abhorrence of them ? did I not abjure them when at the altar, till exhausted nature threw me into insensibility, and saved me from even

hearing the dreadful sentence which consigned me to this living tomb? I am free—Edward, I am free;—nor bars, nor grates, nor dungeons, can fetter the soul.

“The calm which this conviction has brought with it, has procured for me a return to the wonted routine of a conventual life; and I have thankfully acknowledged that there are few situations so hard to endure, but that there are others yet more dreadful. The mind,—the mind;—there lies the world of bliss or woe. As I walked this evening in the convent garden, the fragrance of the flowers, the balmy air, the shrubs gemmed with the fire-flies, the high dark cypresses waving their spiral heads gently to the breeze—all these beauteous works of the Creator were even here gifted with the language of consolation. Could he who framed them intend that his creatures should be wretched? Could he who formed *them*, not bestow on a wretched suppliant the means of

escaping from her misery? Those gleaming insects, that cast their innocuous fires upon the tender flowers, appeared to me like the rays of hope illumining my wishes; they did not blight the buds they shone upon; neither would the new belief which enlightened my soul blast with guilt the flowers of happiness which it irradiated. Edward, confirm these delicious feelings; write to me volumes. Marinella is again allowed to tend me. The unhappy Marinella knows no other joy now. How I pity her! None but one who loves, can pity truly her who *has loved*, and who is betrayed.”

Many more letters of the same nature followed these, but, as they are not necessary to the developement of the story, they are omitted. The following will give the continuance of the tale:—

LETTER FROM
EDWARD HAWKWOOD TO RACHAELE DI
MONTESCUDAJO.

“ At length then, my prayers, my entreaties, my reasonings have prevailed. Blessed be the power which has released thee from thy vain scruples ! It remains now only to execute the deed, and force thee from thy prison. Oh, blessed moment ! how earnestly do I pray for succour to enable me to effect this ! And could I pray, were it in reality a crime for which I asked the aid of Heaven ?—No ! my Rachaelle, be at peace, I conjure you, on this head. The good Fredolfo himself re-assures me, that vows to which the heart never assented are not binding, and he has consented to bless our union at the risk of his own life ; at the same time he represented to me the dangers to which we were both exposed by the step we determine to take : and when I think of subjecting you to

an errant life, amid wilds and woods and dangers, there are moments when I shrink from so terrible a responsibility. Yet pardon, pardon, again I seem to see thy pleading and reproachful eyes, beaming with all the confidence of thy sex's true and most refined passion—that self-devotion so admirable when it is the tribute of a virtuous attachment, so irresistible to the being who is blessed with its possession. There remains only, then, for us to think of the safety of Fredolfo. Marinella is the sole creature who is acquainted with our secret, and he has nothing to fear from her, poor, fallen, and wretched victim that she is: were it only her hatred to your brother, the author of all her wrongs, we have every reason to trust in her fidelity; and Heaven itself will protect that worthy ecclesiastic, who, after having used every means that could be devised to turn us from our purpose, merely to save us from guilt, consents to bless and sanctify our resolve.

My next letter shall give you all necessary details. Support your spirits, dearest Rachaelle; confide in Heaven—and await with composure for further directions from your affianced husband,

“EDWARD HAWKWOOD.”

The next letter in the packet was dated a year after.

“From our Cave near Volterra.

“At length I think we have found a safe abode: the wildness of this site; the nature of the surrounding country, covered with sulphureous exhalations; and the increasing respect in which the peasantry hold Marinella, are all so many safeguards, for which we cannot be sufficiently thankful; yet, often as I press our babe Rachaelle in my arms, I tremble with anxiety, and look forward with a sentiment of restless alarm to the period when your engagements in this country shall be fulfilled, and you can take us to your own cherished England: *there*

our story may escape detection, but *here* there is no rest for the sole of our foot. I know not if it is the continual agitation of spirits in which I live that affects my understanding, but there are times when Marinella's extraordinary behaviour, her lengthened silence, her sudden bursts of prophecy on the destinies of Pisa, its disgrace, its downfall, intermingled with wild and, as it appears, unpremeditated lays, assume a power over me that is quite unearthly. The livid hue of her complexion, her long colourless hair, the habit she has assumed, combine to convey to the beholder a supernatural awe.

“It is not to be believed that this spectral figure was the blooming, brilliant Marinella, rich in the full pride of woman's ripened beauty, the glory of every rural festival. It is impossible now to know her again. And can you guess to what she owes this terrible change?—to the dictates of despair. She procured from some Venetian merchants a poison of so subtle a

nature, that the functions of life are gradually destroyed by its operation. She knew the nature of the drug before she took it, its effects were amply detailed to her, and she chose it for its very qualities. 'I shall have time,' she said, 'to repent; I shall have voluntarily expiated my crime, and the traitor will have leisure to feel my vengeance.' But in all this calculation, where the dictates of evil passions mingled with the better feelings of human penitence and remorse, she would have found herself entirely deceived; for she was at the point of immediate death when it chanced that Fredolfo paid us a visit, and administered a counterpoison, which saved her life, but left her thus a marked and branded being, set apart from the society of other human creatures, disowned by earth, and, as it seems, from the incoherent and daily increasing wildness of her manners, disowned by Heaven. Unhappy, wretched Marinella! involuntarily *I* shrink from her.

Retribution is sometimes ordained for crime even here. She bears this penalty on earth ; I pray that on this earth that penalty may expiate her errors. But who am I that thus presume to arraign another?—am I so innocent? Ah! who may dare to judge their fellow-mortal?—and I,—I, of all who tread this terrestrial scene, how should I pretend? My Edward, there are moments—hours—when my conscience labours, as if oppressed with guilt;—like those waves which roll in upon the shore, and then are cast back to bring upon their heaving breast some perished wreck of poor mortality, so do my thoughts flow in and retreat again, returning laden with sad and portentous images of fearful import and distressing aspect. When you are with me all seems right ; I look at you, and a perfect calm succeeds these troubled thoughts ; but in your absence the spell is fainter,—I take our infant to my heart,—I try to reproduce the blessed sensation, the

delightful conviction that all is, in truth, as it should be, that we are right, and the whole world is wrong—but in vain ;—this happy influence dwells in you, and leaves me when you leave me ; not even your child can reproduce it ; it seems as if a mist divided me from my dear little one, and in my ears a knell is rung, which chimes a fearful import in the fate of this loved one.’

Another letter, after the lapse of another year, ran thus:—

“ It must appear to you, my Edward, that I am a very inconsistent being ; but if the different sensations of the human breast at different times are written down, who is there that can lay claim to an unbroken consistency of feeling ? There are hours and days, which, without being marked by any actual incident, without even any excitement of mind, or any of the mental exertions which follow or precede action, are yet so engraven on remembrance, that they

frequently return in all the precision of distinct portraiture to the recollection : but these pictures, with which memory delights to adorn her chambers, are generally those of landscape and of nature ; the sky, the atmosphere, the liveries of heaven, the tintings and changes of the clouds, then do occasionally impress their imagery in such a delightful manner on the senses, that even when reflected by remembrance, they reproduce that ineffable state of composed enchantment which perhaps is one of the nearest types that mortals can know of heaven. This total abstraction from the past or the future, this consciousness of purity of feeling, this satisfaction in mere existence, leads one far in speculation as to the possibility of deriving happiness from refined thought alone. Yet when I tell you this at one time, my dearest Edward, and at another compare it with my fervid descriptions of a mind worn with its own restless anxiety ; its fever of love, its clouds of terror, I

must appear to you altogether worthless, or at best changeable and vacillating; but it is not so—it is not, believe me,—I am unchanged, unchangeable; the variations of the compass prevent not the needle from being true to the pole.

“The time is drawing near when I am to give birth to another infant. No dear hand will be nigh with its kind sustaining pressure to speak courage and joy to my fainting soul; my heart sinks as the trying hour approaches. I am alone—quite alone; Marinella is once more gone for Radegonda: it is possible that she may not be willing to come,—but there is an aid which never forsakes us—I seek that aid, my dear one, I seek it, and am supported. When you read this, the event will be decided. Should I be called hence, remove these children of our love from this ill-fated country: I wish you never to forget me, but I would not have you mourn me to the hindrance of that resignation which it is a duty to maintain under the severest dis-

pensations. Neither would I have you remain single; think of me as one in Heaven, whose affection, purified from mortal dross, regards only your weal or woe here as it may conduce to your happiness hereafter; choose another partner who will be a pride to you, and whose high qualities will be a guide and pattern for your children. It is not rank, it is not riches, I would have you seek; purity and principle—these alone can confer true honour, true happiness; the rest is all delusion, vain. Receive my fondest, tenderest, truest prayers for your felicity, and take this last embrace from your faithful wife; we shall meet hereafter, farewell!”

On the back of this letter was the date of the decease of the writer, together with the name of the new-born infant, Edward Hawkwood. Another paper with a black seal contained the following words: “I entrust these writings to Marinella Falieri, desiring that she would keep them until a safe opportunity offers of

forwarding them to Edward Hawkwood, my brother, in England. I leave duplicates with Fredolfo, of the order of Camaldoli; and I hereby signify my last will and testament, signed in presence of Marco Paolo and Marinella Falleri. Let all my possessions be divided between my two children, Edoardo and Rachaelle, and may the latter be removed to their uncle Hawkwood's care as soon as it is possible to do so with safety." Sealed with the arms of the Hawkwoods, and signed with the testator's hand in due form."

The mingled emotions which wrung the heart of Edoardo during the perusal of the above papers, were such as to deprive him, for a time, of all distinct reflection. As he gradually accustomed himself to consider the wonderful chain of connexion, which had brought about the interesting discovery of his birth, he was impressed with that deep sense of an Almighty Providence which must come home to the hearts of all who will retrace the circumstances of their

own lives: whether that life be passed in the mere ordinary course of human events, or whether, as in the present case, it is marked by striking situations and combinations, still there will be an ample field for gratitude and praise.

When Hawkwood rejoined Edoardo, and, by a frequent and minute review of them, they had mutually accustomed themselves to the dear recognition of their relationship, together with every circumstance of its disclosure, there remained still one point unexplained, which Edoardo enquired into with a sense of the most agonizing interest. "How did my father die, and where? That melancholy part of the story remains yet unaccounted for."

"It does," rejoined Hawkwood; "but not long shall it lie hid in obscurity."

"Marinella is acquainted with the particulars, that is certain," said Edoardo; and he related the declaration she had recently made when she gave Pranzetti the dagger.

“Is it so?” cried Hawkwood, starting up; “then has the villain Montescudajo short time to live.”

“Alas!” replied Edoardo, laying his hand upon that of Hawkwood’s, “he too is my uncle, my mother’s brother—”

“But thy father’s murderer!” and Hawkwood broke away from Edoardo, who remained absorbed in a multitudinous concourse of contending feelings. Ranieri entered the apartment where he was sitting, with folded arms and thoughtful brow; they started on beholding each other: the former had already been made acquainted with his history, having been intrusted by Hawkwood with a perusal of the manuscript.

After Ranieri’s first congratulations were warmly made, Edoardo enquired with the most lively and sincere interest for the Gherardesca, both on her own account and that of his sister. To these enquiries no satisfactory answer

whatever could be given; and it was agreed upon between them, that the surest and only way to obtain the information they sought, was to force Montescudajo to declare whatever he knew concerning these dear objects of their solicitude. And, as they now held Pafetta in check by the partial knowledge they had of his crimes, they resolved openly to brave his power, and insist upon his disclosing to them whatever he might know of the Gherardesca's present situation.

“ Yet stay,” said Ranieri, pausing to reflect; “ the fact of a nun's having been carried off by an English captain of *condottieri*, will render all our other knowledge respecting Montescudajo's crimes of none effect. Such a fact will neutralize every means we possess; the whole body of the priesthood will rise up against that deed, and they will view every mode of punishment inflicted on her and her descendants for such a crime, as a mere act of justice, perhaps

as the award of Heaven. Depend upon it, Montescudajo's crimes will be merged and forgotten in that infringement of the Church's laws: thy sister too, wherever she may be, will suffer by any disclosure of her birth. There is a time for defying power, and a time for bending to it. It is not always the open expression of a generous indignation against meanness or crime which can most effectually conquer its evil effects. I believe there may exist more of happiness for thee and Rachaelle by a quiet and tranquil submission, by thy secret being still known only to those who love and esteem thee, than by an attempt at overturning received opinions, and braving the prejudices, it may be the errors, of a religious system, which nevertheless prevail over the whole world. If, indeed, there ever arrives that full light, which it is said is now beginning to dawn, another and a happier state of things will certainly accrue; but that cannot take place in our time, and it behoves us not to

precipitate measures by which your interests, perhaps your lives, might be lost."

Scarcely had Ranieri uttered this wise counsel, than Hawkwood returned, foaming with rage.

"He has escaped,—the miscreant!"

"Thank God," thought Edoardo, "for his death could not have restored my dear parents to life."

"And," continued Hawkwood, "it is not known whither he is gone, or what business has called him hence."

"Alas!" cried Ranieri, "I fear it is but too certain, and I know but too well the infamous purpose that he has in view."

Here the Lanfreducci explained to Hawkwood the meaning and nature of his fears, and professed his resolution of following Montescudajo's footsteps, and, if possible, rescuing Ildegarda from his power. Edoardo, it was agreed, should remain with his uncle, and serve under

his banners. While these arrangements were making by the Lanfreducci and his friends, all obstacle to the prosecution of these his schemes was done away by the magistrates sending an acknowledgment to Ranieri, expressive of their regret on account of their late behaviour towards him, and laying the entire blame of the suspicions which had fallen upon him to the conduct and interference of the Gherardesca. They also informed him that his mother was safe and well in the Isola della Gorgona, whither, they said, she had retired for change of air. To these communications Ranieri returned a cool but prudent answer, and would have been content to exert himself in defence of his native city, notwithstanding the indignities he had received at their hands, had not the miserable anxiety he endured on Ildegarda's account palsied every feeling save that of rescuing her from the power of the lawless Montescudajo. Yet the thought of his mother was not without a

place in his breast: the duty he owed, and the love he felt for her, seemed to call him to the Isola. But still Ildegarda's perilous situation superseded every other consideration, and a letter which was sent him openly by the Contessa Zerlina, Montescudajo's late supposed favourite, decided his resolves. This letter, couched in all the glowing language of the most passionate and disappointed love, informed him that Ildegarda had been induced, through the arts of Pafetta, to quit Pisa—that she had been traced to Siena—but from thence she had removed, no one knew whither. It had been supposed, the letter added, that Pafetta's persuasions had prevailed, and they had both removed together from that city.

Much as Ranieri despised the woman who could thus write of the man she professed to love, much as he was disgusted by the bold unfeminine language in which she gave way to the jealous rage of her nature, he did not

disregard the means thus placed in his hands, of forwarding his intentions, and assuming the garb of a pilgrim, as one which would ensure his passing unmolested through all the different states where his purpose might lead him. He contented himself with leaving a letter in the care of Edoardo for his mother, and departed in quest of her who was far dearer to him than his own life.

CHAPTER VI.

THE ADIEU.

Seguì già le speranze, e 'l van desio :
Or ho dinanzi agli occhi un chiaro specchio,
Ov' io veggio me stesso, e 'l fallir mio.

Trionfo del Tempo, Petrarca.

WHEN Ildegarda left Siena, to indulge herself in a parting visit to her castle at her loved Volterra, the delightful freshness of the autumnal air, its invigorating elasticity compared with that of Pisa, seemed to inspire her with fresh hope and life ; even the just cause she had for alarm was for the moment lulled into forgetfulness. The enchanting variety of the scenery ; the tender recollections which crowded upon her at every approach she made to her own palace,

all combined to throw her into that dreamy state of being, which places the material things of earth at immeasurable distance, and makes them seem beneath the consideration of a spiritual intelligence. Arrived at the foot of the terrace which conducted her to her favourite apartments, she endeavoured to enter the great iron gates ; but they were barricadoed, and it was a considerable time before she could get any person to answer her repeated demands for entrance. At length a stranger came, and uncourteously asked what she wanted ?

“ I want to enter, and see the Palace.”

“ I have orders to admit no one,” was the reply.

“ Who gave you those orders ?”

“ Montescudajo.”

An expression of indignation escaped Ildegarda.

“ It was not thus,” she said, “ in the Gherardesca’s time ; the rites of hospitality were administered to all comers.”

“It may be so, but I have nothing to do with that ; I only know my orders, and I have no time to parley with you ; so go your ways.”

“Come,” said Ildegarda, “be persuaded, let me enter ; I only wish to walk about for an hour or two, and take leave of a place which is very dear to me, and which I may never behold again.”

The man stared at her, and then laughed.

“Take leave of a *place* !—why, the woman’s mad—begone, and trouble me not.”

Ildegarda saw that he was one of those rude creatures who scarcely deserve the name of human beings ; but there was yet a key even to *his* feelings, and she tendered a piece of gold to him. His astonishment was great, as he took the offered bribe with a mixture of avarice and fear, scarcely knowing if so great a sum could be real, or the illusion of some witchcraft. He turned it over and over, and at last, in sullen silence, opened the door.

“There,” he said, tossing her a bunch of

keys, “ you may go all over the house and grounds, for there is nothing you can possibly steal.”

How did this coarse greeting shock the feelings of the unhappy Ildegarda ! *Here*, where crowds had knelt to do her homage—here, where the sweet breath of affection and of love had hailed her mistress—a boor, divested of the gentle courtesies of nature, insulted and braved her.

“ It is time,” she said, “ that I receive these rebukes. I have been too much adulated, too much exalted ; I have forgotten the hand that placed me in my station, and showered down benefits upon me. I forgot my dependence ; I forgot my responsibility ; it is well, I am humbled even to the dust—I bow resigned. The viewless sword that Marinella spoke of pierces me. I remember her words—they were not hers, but rather the warning voice of Heaven which I disregarded.”

Such were Ildegarda's thoughts as she slowly ascended the steps that led to the great entrance hall. She paused to look around her. Her favourite vases and statues lay many of them prostrate and broken; the grass grew rankly between the stones of the pavement; the birds were flocking in great numbers around, as if unconscious that any inhabitants were there except themselves; they started away at her approach; and when she turned the key of the hall door, a number of bats and owls, and birds of night, rushed out from the interior, screaming and flapping their heavy wings, as the daylight broke in upon them, and disturbed their unmolested and dark abode. From the damp smell which exhaled, it was evident that no one had thought of airing the building; and it was with some difficulty she opened a shutter and obtained sufficient light to enable her to walk over her desolate palace, with rapid step, as if to assure herself of that which it broke her heart to know.

She sought every well-known chamber: the hangings of many were torn, as it appeared, in wanton mischief; the pictures and ornaments were removed from their places, some lying on the pavement, tied together to be carried away, others no longer there.

“ More and more desolation,” said Ildegarda, her heart beating tumultuously as she passed from one apartment to another, and last of all when she stood in the great hall, where lately hung trophies of her father’s battles, but where now all was dismantled; a few plumes alone of some of the casques waved tremulously to the newly admitted breeze; and one black banner streamed mournfully to and fro.

Ildegarda paused. “ So passes away all human greatness,” she said; and a sublime sensation, mingled with awe, seemed to give her that composure of spirit which arises from the greatness of sorrow, the self-humiliation of a mind chastened by the divine will. For the first

time, Ildegarda felt where true greatness alone resides ; that greatness before which all the principalities and powers of earth must shrink to utter insignificance. Thus impressed by a lesson which was not sent in vain, Ildegarda left the palace of her ancestors, and proceeded to her favourite flower-garden : her steps were arrested by involuntary anguish at beholding this dear object of her care overgrown with weeds, and the fountain which fed these flowery children of her love dried up ; not a walk that was not tangled with briars, and covered with rank weeds “ which had no business there ;” the carnations, her favourite flowers, which often for hours she had tended and cultured with her own hands, could not rear their delicate heads above the overtopping grass ; and blighted and depressed, they showed some imperfect and half withered blossoms more melancholy to behold than had they been uprooted altogether. Ildegarda had seen the proud monuments of man,

the gorgeous hangings, the precious furniture, nay even the memorials of her father's heroism destroyed or lost, without shedding a tear—it was too vast a sorrow for so feeble a tribute; but all the tendernesses of her nature dwelt among flowers and perfumes, all the soft weaknesses of a woman's ineffable fondness lay wounded here, and dropping on a bench she covered her face with her hands, and yielded to the irrepressible flow of tears, which burst from her eyes in showers of weeping. It was long indulged, and seemed to relieve her overcharged heart; the soft air of autumn wafted the redolence of the dying leaves; and every now and then a brisker wind shook the sickly foliage from the decaying boughs, and covered her with their sear and yellow leaves, as it appeared to her fanciful view, in token of sympathising sorrow. She placed one of these withered wanderers in her bosom, and said “Farewell! I shall think of this

hereafter!" then rushing from the scene, mounted her litter, and retook the road, as she supposed, to Siena. Absorbed in her own reflections, Ildegarda regarded not the country through which they passed, and at length, overcome by fatigue, fell asleep. When she opened her eyes, she found herself in a wood she did not recollect, and before the Gherardesca had time to recal her senses or make inquiries, a troop of armed men surrounded her, who rudely demanded whatever she possessed. It was a relief to her first impulse of terror to find they only sought her gold, and Ildegarda was actually complying, when a young soldier appeared, who addressed the lawless depredators, and soon liberated her from further molestation.

Ildegarda thought she had some recollection of the voice of her deliverer; but as his visor was down, and as it was no time for conversation, she passed on, without dwelling longer

upon the circumstance; but what arrested all her attention, was the certainty of her being in an unfrequented, and, to her, an unknown road.

“Where are you taking me to?” cried Ildegarda, addressing her conductors; and now for the first time she perceived they were not the men she had hired at Siena, but strangers. In vain Ildegarda threatened, in vain she expostulated; she could obtain no answer whatever to her questions, and sunk back in her litter, convinced that at present all attempts to obtain an account of the truth was fruitless. The disaster she had most dreaded, Ildegarda now felt sure had befallen her; she was in Montescudajo’s power: “Better, far better would it have been for me,” she thought, “to have become the prey of the soldiery, than to be thus at the mercy of one who knows no bounds to his iniquitous passions.”

Ildegarda now felt for the small case which contained her jewels and her gold; that was

still safe, and for the first time in her life she pressed these treasures in her hand with a sensation of their being truly valuable. The men continued to guide her litter at a swift pace in silence, and thus they travelled that whole day : at night-fall they arrived at a single house, where it appeared they had been expected, for refreshments were in readiness : a female waited upon Ildegarda, and every attention was paid her ; but the same obstinate silence was observed, and she refused to profit by the bed which had been prepared for her, resting only on the chair where she sat, while at every slight noise that occurred during the night, she started up in fear and agitation.

When day dawned, the men brought her word it was time to set forth again on their journey. Once more she made them an appeal, entreating them to inform her by whose orders they were acting, and threatened and soothed them by turns, promising them great rewards if they

would liberate her ; but true to their employer, whoever he might be, Ildegarda could obtain no answer, and received in reply only certain signs, which expressed the necessity of her complying with their orders to proceed immediately. Although the fear and anxiety of her mind prevented her having any enjoyment of the country through which she passed, it was impossible not to remark it, both from the change it presented in its character, a circumstance that distinctly told her she had left Tuscany, as well as from its own striking peculiarities : the rude grandeur of its sterile forms, the wretched squalid mien of the few peasants that she passed, the absence of villages, or towns, led her to apprehend that every step was bearing her further away from a chance of obtaining a rescue. Another long day's travel brought her to another place of rest more terrific in its appearance than the last, for it was situated in the heart of a forest, and there were no females

in the house; the heaviness of fatigue nevertheless weighed down the eyes of the wretched Ildegarda, and for a few hours her senses were steeped in sleep. Nothing disturbed her repose, and when she awoke she was greeted by the cheerful crowing of a cock, than which no music was ever sweeter to the ear, for it told her of all the common charities of common life, and seemed not only a herald of the light, but of the light of hope; so powerfully are the most ordinary circumstances gifted to support and cheer the heart, if Providence blesses them to such use. She was summoned to continue her journey, and felt relieved on quitting the dark shades of the forest to come out on the margin of a large and beautiful lake. By all the descriptions she had heard, and by the nature of the country through which she had passed, she guessed that she was now on the borders of the lake of Bolsena, nor was she mistaken.

“Are we going to Rome?” she asked with a sort of half sentiment of joy at the idea.

“Beyond Rome, Signora,” was the brief reply. “And now be at peace, for in another day or two you will have reached your destination and be consigned into our master’s hand.”

“It was, then,” thought Ildegarda, “as I feared, and this wretched man imagines to subdue me to his will by violence ; but he has still to learn that a woman can defy his power.” Any evil of which we know the full extent appears less formidable than that which we view through the shadowy mists of incertitude, and Ildegarda, by addressing her vows to heaven for guidance and support, found, if not consolation in the certain knowledge of her trials, at least strength and resolution to act for the best, under circumstances as they might occur. Arrived on the *Campagna* of Rome, she could not mistake its desolate magnificence. Owing to its vastness,

when looked down upon from the more mountainous country by which it is surrounded, it appears like one extent of flat undiversified plain ; but, when entered upon, the eye of taste discerns a thousand beauties, of wondrous and novel kind, to astound and to delight. There are inequalities and interminable lines, and remnants of buildings, besides that it is stupendous from its magnitude viewed even abstractedly from its story and its antiquity. When storms and sunshine chase each other alternately over this mighty expansion of earth, there is no possible variety of light and shadow which does not here take place.

“ Yes !” said Ildegarda, as she surveyed this wonderful scene ; “ neither prose nor poetry can convey an idea of it to those who have not witnessed it.” Once or twice encouraged by the relenting gentleness of manner which she observed in one of her guides, she made some ob-

servation expressive of the sentiment she felt ; but the man only said—

“ I am glad you are getting into good spirits again ; in truth it was a pity such a lovely lady should be unhappy : and, after all, the Conte is a very handsome Signor, and I have known many a fine Signora who would be glad to obtain his love. But as for this dull ugly place, I can see no beauty in it, not I ; neither in the poor swollen creatures’ yellow faces who pace about it like so many hideous monsters : and to come out of our beautiful country, green and rich, and full of olives and vines, and then to be in admiration at this ; *eh, come !* Signora, I cannot understand it.” Just after Ildegarda’s cavalcade arrived in sight of Rome, she found to her inexpressible disappointment that they turned off to the left, and went by unfrequented roads in the heart of the Sabine hills. Through this most beautiful and wondrous country, they journeyed several days, evidently making a long *détour* to

avoid all towns or inhabited districts. At any other time the grandeur and exquisitely novel character of the scenery that courted her admiration, would have excited in Ildegarda the most lively sentiment of enchantment: as it was, even exclamations of surprise and delight constantly escaped her. Broken screens of rocks intersecting the long high line of the horizon, which, on either side of the above screen, extended with sublime effect; ruins of palaces and towers, whose forms and positions appeared those of magic, rather than the work of men's hands; a luxurious growth of plants and foliage, broidering the path, or waving their leafy honours against the brilliant sky; the intenseness of the colouring which was spread over the whole; the beauty of the garb worn by the peasantry,—excited that inebriation of the faculties which “bears one from one's self away,” and made Ildegarda lose, at times, a sense of her own unhappy condition. At length, towards the close of night, she arrived

in a wooded valley, where the ilex was of immense growth, and mingled with the chestnut and the beech. They mounted a steep ascent, and reached the entrance of a domain; the large iron portals were unlocked at the call of her guides, and they proceeded through an open space to the door of an extensive and magnificent building: lights were observed moving rapidly to and fro, and in a moment several attendants in costly liveries awaited to conduct Ildegarda to her prison. Here, for the first time, her heart seemed to faint within her, and it was with difficulty she could walk through a suite of highly decorated chambers. Still she saw not him whom she most dreaded, and gradually she regained her self-possession. Several females presented themselves to her as destined to receive her orders, and obey her every wish. She selected one of these whose countenance attracted her, and dismissed the rest; then throwing herself into a magnificent high-backed ebony chair,

which the girl officiously placed for her, saying it had been particularly set apart for her, she remained some minutes in silent consideration of all the wonderful events which had befallen her. The guide who had lately shown himself, won by her gentle and attractive demeanour, now looked in, and called to Agata, saying,

“ Sister, see that the Signora has every thing she can possibly want ; you may give her every thing, you know, but her liberty.”

“ And that is the only thing I wish for,” said Ildegarda, in a melancholy voice.

“ You may have that too in time, Signora ; be of good cheer, we know not how soon Montescudajo may be tired of you, for he is always tired of all his loves. There is Agata will tell you all about it, to divert you : do divert the Signora, for the Poveretta has made my heart ache for her many a time.”

The voice of kindness, even in its rudest guise, was yet soothing, and with a melancholy

smile, Ildegarda besought the good offices of Agata, and suffered her to assist her, and sit by her, while she retired to take that rest of which she had so much need. When Ildegarda arose the next day, and examined the splendid place of her detention, she felt the greater dismay from being made aware of its extent, and the variety and care with which every outlet beyond the domain was guarded. As she wandered through the beauteous wilderness under the over-arching boughs of the gigantic timber, she could catch distant gleams of the sea and the *Campagna*, which formed a complete picture, and with the ocean was associated in her fancy ideas of liberty and power, which seemed to be sent for her express comfort. Certainly, this vast domain, beautiful in its wildness, contained within its romantic precincts all that fiction ever told of banditti or persecuted love.

Days rolled by, and still the dreaded personage who was the invisible gaoler, appeared

not. By degrees, Ildegarda sunk into a comparatively quiescent state; and as she daily gained upon the affections of Agata and her brother, the hope revived of persuading them to connive at her escape. After a residence of about three weeks, Agata came in one day to her, evidently very much agitated, but, as it appeared, it was an agitation of most pleasurable kind."

"There is," said she, blushing and hesitating, "there is an immense concourse of pilgrims passing by this place to-night, on their way to Rome, and the whole Paese of Castel Gandolfo is coming to view them go by the Chiesa di San Tomaso, and *un amico mio* is coming too; and so you see, if you would only promise me not to run away, I could take you to the great terrace, into the temple that overlooks the road, and let you sit there and see the show, while I stepped down to Jeronymo for a few moments. The reason I tell you this is because you see, Signora, you look so very good-natured, that I

must tell you the truth: my brother is very cross, and will not let me ever look at poor Jeronymo, and we may not have such another opportunity of meeting for years. See, I have got the key of the temple and the door under it—I stole it from beneath the *guardiano's* pillow: only promise me, Signora, not to run away, for I should certainly be killed if you did. Ah! you cannot know what Montescudajo can do; they tell terrible tales of him, and some which happened in this very Palazzo, that make my hair to stand on end when I think of them, only I never do think of them, because it is so disagreeable to be frightened.”

Ildegarda had listened attentively without interrupting the girl, determined, if possible, to turn her communication to good account. Ildegarda's heart beat almost as quick as Agata's, when she replied—

“You may safely entrust me with your secret, for nothing should persuade me to make mis-

chief between you and your brother, and indeed, if you could only prove to me that Jeronymo is a good young man, and seeks your hand in honourable marriage, I have means of facilitating your wishes."

"Oh! my gracious Signora, how blessed you would make us—but then Montescudajo," (and Agata spoke under her breath,)—"why, he would make no more of sticking his knife into us, and flinging our bodies into the lake, than I would do of breaking the bit of stick I hold. You cannot wonder, therefore, dear Signora, that I should not yield to your entreaties, and let you run away, but if ever I should have it in my power——"

"Perhaps," rejoined Ildegarda, "if you could run away yourself, also, with Jeronymo——"

"That would indeed be delightful."

"We will think of it," said Ildegarda: "in the mean time, we will go this evening to the temple, on the terrace.

“ *Tante grazie delle sue gentilezze,*” rejoined the delighted Agata, kissing her hand, and away she flew to make her arrangements.

If the intervening moments of existence, which come in between us and our wishes, could be annihilated at our pleasure, what a condensation of life would ensue! It is the great lesson of existence, however, to know how to use these moments to the best advantage. It is our own fault if they pass in vain.

Much as Ildegarda’s peculiar situation justified impatience, she endeavoured from past experience to moderate the tumult of her thoughts, and in some degree succeeded. When the actual moment, however, arrived, she became no longer able to regulate the beatings of her heart, and required the assistance of Agata to enable her to reach the temple. It was a gaily decorated building, covered with frescos, representing the loves of Cupid and Psyche.

“ *Questi Amorini,*” said Agatha, looking at

the frescos, "*quante son vezzose*;"—and though she was in actual expectation of her lover, she could find expressions of admiration for the art which gave a representation of the passion; so natural is it for Italians to feel the beauty of the pencil. Now at a distance appeared the moving boughs of the trees, which the inhabitants of the country carried in their hands before the procession, and now the procession itself came in view. Agata mumbled over a few Latin prayers, holding her rosary in her hands, and Ildegarda sent up some sincere, and, it may be hoped, more efficacious aspirations to the ear of Heaven. When the long line of pilgrims passed slowly beneath the terrace on which they stood, they were accompanied by a troop of penitents, who were clad in linen or cloth garments that completely covered them, and through which they only saw and breathed by means of holes cut for the mouth and eyes. One of the latter persons went about

right and left, with a small box to contain money, and he stopped under the window at which Ildegarda was placed, holding it up for her charity; but the terrace was built on a rock and was so high from the ground, besides being surrounded by a deep moat, that it was a great chance if any piece of money that was thrown from where she stood, could reach its destination in safety. While Ildegarda was hesitating what to do, Agata suddenly espied Jeronymo with a knot of peasants laughing gaily, and trying to snatch a flower from a pretty girl, with whom he was evidently coquetting.

“ I cannot believe,” said Agata, “ that that is really Jeronymo;” and again she looked, leaning over the window as if she would throw herself out.

“ Yes, it is, though,” she added, colouring : “ Well, well! I will be revenged, for I had promised to take a walk with him; and now,” she said, holding up the key, which was to have

afforded her egress from the domain, and making signs to him,—“and now thus shall I do,” and she put it in her bosom, crossing her hands before her, and sitting down on a chair, swinging herself to and fro upon its legs, as if in derision of him; while he stood making sundry gesticulations to his inexorable love. In the meanwhile Ildegarda’s attention was rivetted by the demeanour of the penitent pilgrim, who had besought her charity, and was at the same time endeavouring to attract her attention by various signs, apparently with much cautious reserve. Her curiosity was wound up to the highest pitch of agitation; but she knew no way to satisfy it, and did not choose to entrust Agata with her observations, not conceiving that she was to be relied upon for any thing. Ildegarda’s principal dependance rested on the girl’s own interests, which, had it not been for the unfortunate circumstance which she just witnessed of Jeronymo’s infidelity, would have induced her to

descend and walk away, leaving her prisoner to attempt softening some heart by the means of gold at least, if all other means of escape failed. But now it appeared that Agata had not the slightest intention of favouring her lover that night, and, consequently, Ildegarda's hopes of gratifying her own curiosity seemed completely at an end; when the former rose up, and shaking her hands in defiance at Jeronymo, desired Ildegarda to follow her to the Palazzo directly; saying which, she began closing the shutters of the temple. While her back was turned away, the pilgrim pulled a scarf from beneath his garment, on which Ildegarda had herself embroidered the well-known words, "Alla Giornata!" What her feelings were, it is impossible to paint; but at the same moment Agata rudely closed the *persiana*, and led her back to the palace.

CHAPTER VII.

THE LANDING.

“ Dal valer nasce in lei la meraviglia,
E da la meraviglia indi il diletto.
Poscia il diletto che in mirarlo piglia,
Le accende il cor di dolce ardente affetto,
E mentre ammira eloda 'l Cavaliero,
Pian, piano a novo Amore apre 'l sentiero.”

Tasso. c. I. st. 81.

ON the night when La Strega sailed away with Bruno Grillo, it may be remembered they steered for the Isola della Gorgona, and there they arrived safely. As soon as the sail of their boat appeared in view, the whole sisterhood of the convent assembled to say grand mass; and the shore was lined with sea-faring people, all testifying the interest they took in the landing of this boat, but expressing that interest in va-

rious ways according to their various characters. Now she lay on one tack, now another: then steering right before the wind, beautifully she bounded into the harbour. In an instant Bruno Grillo leaped on shore; in another, the best produce of the island, as well as that of many other nations, were placed at Marinella's disposal, each person in depositing their propitiatory offering demanding some favour of *La sua Maesta*; by which title she was hailed universally in the island. Having taken in her cargo she put to sea again; and the wind suddenly changing, her boat cut through the waves, and was quickly out of sight.

“Ay, there she goes!” cried an old weather-beaten sailor, “she has all the winds in her pocket; it is the same to Marinella, blow north, blow south; she has only to whistle for them.”

Poor little Bruno Grillo's first words were,

“Where is my mother?” The man to whom he addressed himself answered—

“Oh! that must be the woman’s child who is always going about, and asking every one ‘Where is my son?’ The old lady is very well. She dwells in the convent yonder with the Signora Lanfreducci, and they are all grown very merry, so that, were it not for the loss of some friends, about whom they are perpetually bemoaning themselves, they might be quite happy; for they have a pleasant place to live in, and every thing they can desire, except their liberty.” As Bruno Grillo was receiving this intelligence, they had walked up to the convent; and when he announced himself, there was a general rush of persons to greet him with a hearty welcome; last in order, but certainly not least in love, came the good Radegonda, with outspread arms and garments to wrap her beloved Bruno in a long embrace. Never could she satiate her eyes with looking at him, until, at length,

observing the poor creature was half dead with cold, she got him all requisite comforts, and allowed not the curiosity of any one to be gratified until she saw that rest and warmth had restored him to his wonted vigour.

Rachaella's first inquiries of Bruno were for the Gherardesca ; " Dear, honoured lady," she said, " never have I forgotten to pray for her ; it is all poor Rachaella can do."

The ignorance in which Bruno was respecting the fate of Ildegarda, gave unutterable concern to Rachaella ; and the Lanfreducci, too, expressed a tender regard and interest for her, which quite surprised Bruno Grillo. No sooner was he left alone with his mother to discourse freely, than he related to her every event which had befallen himself, as well as those which concerned Ranieri, as far as they had come to his knowledge. Various were the expressions of fear and love and joy with which Radegonda frequently interrupted his narration ; but when he came to

the description of the last scene of his adventures in Marinella's cabin, Radegonda clasped her hands together, and, falling on her knees, said—

“Heaven be praised! now the matter is nearly come to a conclusion, and the wicked will have their desert: one has only to sit still and wait to see the end, and all will be well; but there is yet, as Marinella said, a seal to be broken, which can only be broken by the master hand, otherwise much ruin might ensue. Keep to thyself what thou knowest, my brave son, very quickly the rest will be revealed: and if I could only be sure of our beloved Ildegarda's safety, I should now lie down and close my old eyes in peace.”

“But who have we here?” asked Bruno Grillo, looking out on the strand, and observing a gay young knight walking by Rachaella.

“That is an English Cavalier,” answered Radegonda, “who was sent here assuredly for our good. He is a cousin of the captain Hawk-

wood, whom you heard of, and, to distinguish the one from the other, he is called the *Falcone in Bosco*. He put in here from stress of weather, and has become so enamoured of Rachaelle, that it would do your heart good to see him. As long as the Gherardesca's fate (Heaven bless her !) is unknown, nothing will persuade that dear girl Rachaelle to give him a decided answer; of that I feel certain. But what I could not have believed possible is, nevertheless, come to pass: she is not indifferent to that young man's addresses; and if all goes as I expect it will, a pretty couple they will make as one might desire to see. Only look at this mantle of Venice brocade! he gave it me, and many other things besides. I assure you, Bruno, he is as proper a young knight as one could desire to have for that sweet damsel's husband. But, oh! the hard-hearted creature that I am to think with pleasure of any thing now my dearest lady and mistress is an outcast wanderer. I will

tell you, my own precious Bruno, if it be necessary, I will even part with thee again to do that sweet nursling a service. I have been working hard enough here to secure her a place in the Lanfreducci's breast, and, in truth, Radegonda has seldom set about any work that she has not accomplished. Oh ! should those two blessed people, her son and Ildegarda, ever come together again, I do not think the Lanfreducci is the woman any longer to object to their union. The melancholy farewell my poor mistress wrote to her ; the having consigned her possessions into her care ; above all, her promise not to see Ranieri more ; were so many proofs of her greatness of soul, that she never will forget them. She told me so herself ; and the tear was in her eye as she said, ' Nurse, that lady of thine has a noble mind ; I have wronged her, and therefore I am happy to make this reparation, and tell one of her faithful servitors that I lament having entertained an unfavourable

opinion of her.' Yes, indeed, good Bruno, it was thus Ermenegilda spake to me—and then the tear in her eye ! I assure you that was no common sight ; doubtless it was wrung from her heart's core, for nothing less could have forced it there. But now, you see, she is surrounded by all the Gherardesca's old servants—here am I—here are you—here is Maestrillo—Messer Cino and Zanobi, too, just arrived from Assisi—Rachaella likewise, without whom she cannot now bear to pass a day—and all this has been brought about under Providence by my care ; and one other blessing—Nino Pucci's death. Oh ! if we had but my dear mistress now, all would be happiness and joy."

" Well, may be so, God grant it may, my dearest mother ; but I do not exactly see how that can happen so long as Montescudajo is alive ; for he will be more jealous than ever should Ranieri wed Ildegarda : and by what Marinella let out that night in her den, I cannot

suppose a man whose designs were not stopped by the commission of murder, will be so by any minor consideration. Tell me, my dearest mother, tell me the tale of the English Knight's death ; surely that secret is not hid from thee ?”

“ Thus much I may disclose ; but be prudent, my precious child, although I can refuse thee nothing,” kissing and pressing him in her arms. “ The story runs thus :—

“ Edoardo's father was publicly challenged to single combat by Montescudajo : the former declared he never would lift an arm against Montescudajo ; the latter then said, ‘ Let him look to himself, the cowardly betrayer ! for, wherever I meet him, there will I take vengeance on the disgrace and insult he has placed upon me.’ They did meet in a lonely place ; Hawkwood defended his own life as long as he was able, but, true to his vow, would not take advantage of his enemy's blind fury, as, he said on his dying bed, he might have done, when

he could have silenced him for ever ; and so at length he fell the victim of this forbearance, pierced by many strokes. It is said that Marinella's sudden appearance, under the most extraordinary aspect of terror, prevented Montescudajo from completing his vengeance ; he dropped the dagger, and fled. Hawkwood was removed to a place of safety for the moment, but not conceiving him to be long secure in one place, she had him conveyed to La Torre, near Pisa, where he expired, as you heard Jacopo Scrassi relate to the Gherardesca."

" It is a woeful history," said Bruno Grillo, " and the more so, as it confirms all my fears for my dear mistress. What hope is there for her, if she has fallen into the power of such a man as Pafetta?"

" Our hope is in the arm of Providence alone ; there is none other ; but none other is necessary. Now see where your old friends come seeking you ;" and Zanobi and Cino approached, bidding

him a thousand kindly welcomes: and they questioned him, and delighted in puzzling him when he came suddenly upon a part of his history which he was not to tell, laughing very heartily at the awkward manner in which he stopped short, and said, “ Now that is enough ; but soon Cino relapsed into his wonted seriousness, saying, “ The stars did not deceive me ; they never do deceive any one, as I have said elsewhere : had that dear wilful lady only listened to my warning, when the position of the constellations spoke in such decided manner that a child almost might have read their meaning—all these dreadful events might have been avoided ;—but even now I see, by certain configurations, that if the planet Venus should pass her superior♂, as I expect, about the end of the month, all evil may yet be averted.”

Rachaella listened with pleased attention to these and similar declarations, but the general tone of her mind was wonderfully restored ; and

though she was not, nor ever could be, with her imaginative nature, exempt from superstitious belief, it was at least a better regulated superstition, and was always under subjection to that true faith in the divine will, which harmonizes every sentiment, and, by revolving every event to that great source of all things, calms the mind to ineffable composure. There is an indescribable charm arises to well-constituted and gentle beings, in finding they are necessary to the happiness of those who are older than themselves. To soften the hardness which is apt to steal over advancing life, to soothe its ruggedness, and substitute the flowery influences of tenderness in the room of sterile cheerless indifference, is the business and occupation which suits the idea we form of an angel's ministry on earth,—and such had been the late employment of Rachaela. Ermenegilda had dwelt too long in the rigid circle of justice and duty, to the exclusion of all the softer feelings which shed a grace on

life. Disappointed in her early years, her affections had received a chill which rendered the value of her very virtues less effective; she was perhaps conscious of this defect herself, and that consciousness added to the evil. She thought nobody loved her—most wretched thought! most blighting misery! She walked on firmly in the strict path of integrity and honour, but the charity she dispensed, the duties she performed, returned not that sweetest blessing without which they have no reward on earth,—the consciousness of being beloved. With advancing life this evil increased, and though it produced no peevish complaints, it rendered communication with her arid, and devoid of charm. To produce a change upon such a character was most grateful to a heart framed like Rachaela's. There was a fond tenderness in *her* nature, which could not live without the gentle interchange of all those daily courtesies which shed true brightness upon life, and so great was this

gift of imparting softness to those with whom she came in habitual contact, that even Ermenegilda called her “ my sunbeam.” There was nothing interested or deceptive in the devotion of her time and her thoughts to the Lanfreducci ; it was a spontaneous emanation of sweetness, which fell with balmy influence on the parched existence of the latter, and produced that beneficial change which every one acknowledged who had any communication with her.

While Rachaella was thus engaged, the young *Falcone* had ample leisure to see and feel the charm which she dispensed : there is none surely more gifted with power to subdue and keep a heart. As he observed her fulfilling all these minor attentions of domestic duty with equable yet enchanting temper, and without which no talents, however great, in woman, will ever fulfil her destiny on earth, or indeed ever obtain her the happiness she aspires to, he said to himself, “ Why this captivating

girl is fit to be an English wife ;” (and he could pay her no higher compliment) his passionate admiration, thus sanctioned by reason, led him far in the flowery path of innocent love, and he thought to obtain an answering sentiment in her breast, was to ensure felicity. The situation in which they were placed, afforded them ample leisure to enter into and observe those delicate shades of character, which are too ethereal to be noticed in the busier scenes of active life, but of which they were both singularly gifted to appreciate the beauty and the delight. It was impossible that Rachaela should not be touched by the species of admiration which she excited in the *Falcone* ; but he, with the real impress of true and refined passion, conceived himself arrived at despair, while she trustingly leant upon his arm as they wandered on the rocky coast, and in recounting to him her past existence, dwelt upon her admiration for Ranieri, and described him as a creature of

unequalled form and mind. He did not know that she could not have done so, had the same sentiment now accompanied her words, which once would have rendered all expression of them impossible : she spoke of a thing that had been, but which hopelessness of a return had very much enfeebled, or rather transmuted ; but to him they seemed the positive denial of any hope of answering attachment to himself. Yet, as if not satisfied with self-tormenting, he requested her perpetually to sing him a song which she used to sing when he first became acquainted with her. She frequently complied, but every time with greater reluctance, and she wondered why she should so much dislike the words and air now which had once been so grateful to her. The words ran thus :—

RACHAELLA'S SONG.

“ If still in lonely walk or hour,
A latent sigh will rise,
And with its magic-kindling power
The melting soul surprise ;

What though 'tis enemy of rest,
 And is by Prudence chidden,
 That latent sigh is Feeling's guest—
 Then be that sigh forgiven.

And if a wand'ring wish returns
 For raptures we forsake ;
 And if again the bosom burns
 And dormant passious wake ;
 That wand'ring wish, that kindling flame,
 Which came, although unbidden,
 Deserves more pity sure than blame ;—
 'Tis free by lightning riven.

The wither'd leaves, the broken boughs,
 Are emblems apt, I ween,
 Of that which thought of broken vows
 Gives to the hopeless mien :
 But who can chase these thoughts away
 That are for e'er returning ?
 The very thought they should not stay
 Sets all the bosom burning.

Scarcely had she ended this song when the mast of a ship appeared in view ; it grew and grew as it advanced. Oh, the interest of watching an approaching sail, when news is anxiously expected ! In a moment Rachaella's eyes brightened, her pale cheek glowed as she cried, " Per-

haps that vessel brings us tidings of my dear brother ; let us to the port !” and seizing the arm of the *Falcone*, away they flew together, like birds, in very truth, who were skimming the earth with rapid wings. But when they arrived at the harbour, they found the galley had only reached the coast to send a letter on shore, and continued her course. The letter was for the *Falcone*. Rachaela requested him to bring her word if there were any tidings of her brother, and left him to peruse it alone and undisturbed. The English captain wrote to his relation, expressing his opinion that he ought ‘to come directly to Pisa ; half reproached, and half bantered him on his long stay in the island ; asked if there were no other boats in the world than that which was now obliged to lie for repair in the harbour of the Isola della Gorgona ; and ended, by saying that had he been on the coast of Sorento, he should have supposed him spell-bound in the cave of the Syrens. The letter con-

cluded thus:—"Whatever enchantments surround thee, let them not wean thee from thy duty; break through all the obstacles that tend to enslave thee. Remember, John, *thou art an Englishman.*"

It was a word of electric power, and he felt strengthened in its might.

"I must be worthy of her," he said, "whether she scorn me or not; it will be a consolation hereafter to reflect on having been so. No more fond delaying, no more interviews to render me infirm of purpose. I must fly temptation."

As he spoke he turned the corner of some clustering rocks, which had prevented him from observing a small and almost circular boat, which lay moored in a little creek on the shore.

"Now," said he, speaking aloud as if to confirm himself in his resolve, "if the owner of this boat would but appear, I would hire it to bear me hence."

Scarcely were the words spoken, when a female figure of extraordinary mien, started up from the bottom of the bark, where she had lain concealed, saying :—

“ Now or never ! time and tide
Will for no man turn or bide :
Now or never sail with me,
And the green wave thou shalt see
Dyed deep with purple gore :
Stay not on th’ inglorious shore !
Glory honour’d, duty done,
Richly sets our evening sun ;
But murk and stormy comes the night,
To those who live in vain delight.”

“ Who art thou, strange being, that thus adjurest me ; and what earnest wilt thou give me of bearing me to Pisa, should I consent to sail with thee ?”

Marinella laughed long and loudly, till the rocks re-echoed with that unearthly clang. At the same instant Bruno Grillo appeared, and without uttering a word, leapt into the little bark. *Falcone* would not be surpassed in cou-

rage by the poor dwarf Bruno; and, though half uncertain as to the propriety of the measure, leapt in also. And now, untwisting the cable which fastened the boat round a stone, Marinella hoisted her light sail; the quiet wind swelled to a breeze, and the outline of the island only was quickly all that remained to view of the fairy Gorgona: at length it diminished to a speck, then faded fainter and more faint upon the eye, till it was utterly lost in distance. All that day the tiny bark scudded merrily along. Bruno Grillo whispered his companion, "We are not going to Pisa; we have passed the mouth of the Pisan port many hours ago."

"By St. George," cried the Englishman, "if this old beldame has cheated me, she shall rue the day!"

"For mercy's sake! Signor, do not make her angry."

"Not make her angry, when I have engaged her boat for the very especial purpose of taking

me to one port, and she takes me to another. Am I not to pay her for it?"

A question which, replied to in the affirmative, appeared in the Englishman's mind quite unanswerable.

"I know not," rejoined Bruno Grillo, "any thing about your engagements with Marinella; but this I know, he is a bold man, and not a wise one, who disputes with her. Again I implore you, Signor, if you have any regard for my life, allowing you have none for your own, to forbear asking her questions: trust to her, and she will be your friend; doubt her, and Heaven have mercy upon us!"

The terror evinced by Bruno softened *Falcone's* wrath, and he satisfied himself by declaring that he would only ask her a civil question or two; which could not offend her; witch, or no witch. Marinella during this time had been sitting in the stern of the boat, her eyes half closed, her arms crossed on her breast, and

rocking herself to and fro with the motion of the wave, while she chanted some low unintelligible strain, the murmurs of which alone reached the ears of those with her.

“Where are we going?” cried John Hawkwood impetuously; “why did you deceive me?”

“Sciocco,” answered Marinella, “as if I should think it necessary to account to thee for my actions!” and stooping down, she unloaded a basket that she had stowed away aft.

“Here; eat, drink, and hold thy tongue.” Saying which, she distributed some food; and when they had been well refreshed, she next supplied them with mantles, desiring them to lie down and sleep. “The time is at hand,” she said, “when your strength may serve you and others, in an hour of need: *this* is the hour of rest; use it to its appointed purpose.”

Bruno Grillo lost no time in obeying her, but English John declared himself unable to sleep; and, sitting at the prow of the boat, he watched

the sinking sun, now touching the horizon as it sat in pomp upon its ocean throne. Purple and gold were the rolling clouds which surrounded the blazing orb, and to a fanciful view seemed like the curtains meet to be drawn around its bed of rest ; lower and lower sunk the dazzling ball, casting its rays upwards in many glorious tracks of living light ; the waves were red with the effulgence of the beams, but soon changing to an iris hue, the pale and beautiful green prevailed, till sea and sky were mingled, and appeared to form one mysterious element ; and then the stars came twinkling forth, and danced in the ocean, split into various gems of light, and multiplied to countless hosts ; the heavens scintillated with innumerable fires, and the ocean reflected its splendour. Such was the midnight hour on the Tuscan coast,—

“ Before whose splendours all earth’s pageants fail.”

As Hawkwood gazed upon this glorious sight, he wondered if Rachaella was looking out from

her window, and whether she too beheld it ; its beauties were much enhanced to his fancy by indulging the fond belief. And now he began to repent his abrupt departure from the Isola della Gorgona. "What madness," he said, "prevailed over my usual calm reason, to induce me to quit her, without even assigning a cause for my having done so? I deserve to lose her. Lose her!" he added; "have I ever gained her? presumptuous that I am!"

Notwithstanding all these interesting thoughts, the chill of the night air prevailed, and he requested Marinella to give him a supply of her cordials; she did so, and partook sparingly herself; then she signed to him to lie down; and this time he took his place by Bruno's side, who was sleeping soundly, unconscious of every care. As John the *Falcone* composed himself likewise to rest, between sleeping and waking, he thought he heard a soft and wild music, which went and came, and while it charmed it soothed; under

this sweet influence he sank to repose. When the glittering sunlight awoke the sleepers the next morning, they found themselves still on the ocean. A small island was dimly visible in the distance. “Why, where are we, my good dame? Do not keep us any longer in suspense. Is that land the Isola della Gorgona? are we going back in our course?” Marinella made him no reply; but rising up, she unbound the fillet that fastened her hair, and cast it in the sea; then spreading her long and snowy tresses to the winds, she said:—

“Wail, child of Ocean! Pisa wail!
Thus scatter’d shall thy greatness fail;
The nurseries of thy seamen gone!
For Corsica raise high thy moan;
And for Sardinia clothed be
In sackcloth, robe of misery!
Thine *was* the strength of Ocean’s wave,
By that thou couldst the nations brave;
But all thy granaries cannot be
A bulwark ’twixt thy foes and thee.
Red flow the billows to my sight:
Prepare, prepare, prepare for fight!

For though defeat thine arms await,
Laurels are reaped at glory's gate.
Victor, or vanquish'd—nobly dare,
Deserve at least the palm to wear.
And now the purple tide of blood
Comes fresher in the rolling flood :
Prepare for fight, for fight prepare ;
Behold the combat,—look, 'tis *there* !”

And she pointed to several galleys which were waging an unequal contest with a few boats of very far inferior strength. The Englishman longed to be in the midst of the engagement, although he was ignorant of the parties thus engaged, and he seized a short heavy broadsword, the only weapon he had brought with him. His mailed coat, his breast-plate, his iron boots, together with the rest of his armour, were on the Isola della Gorgona, where softer cares than those of war employed his hours, and he felt the blush of shame colour his face as he said, “ Ah ! I should not now be thus unprepared for combat, had I not forgotten the duties of my station, and neglected the precau-

tions necessary to be observed in my career. Still I have my sword,—what need I more?”

Poor Bruno Grillo, in despite of his natural infirmities, possessed an aspiring and brave spirit, and he said to the English warrior, “Let us fight for the oppressed.”

“Well said, my spirited Bruno; it were a shame indeed not to second thy prowess.” But Marinella suddenly set about the helm, and lay upon another tack, hovering round the combatants near enough to be observed without coming close to them. Twice she circled the space on which they fought; then she stood upon the edge of the prow, casting her arms wildly about, and singing—

“Water lily, water lily, thou art broken from thy stem:

Pisa’s lost the fairest boast

That graced her ocean diadem:

Ravaged now will be thy coast,

A foreign victor’s humbled prey:

What leagued nations vainly tried

For years to conquer—falls to-day.

Mourn, Pisa, mourn,—thy lily torn,
Her leaves are scattered to the breeze,
Heaven's power hath humbled in a morn
Fairer and greater yet than these.
Yet not unhonour'd shalt thou fall,
“The nation's scoff, the spoiler's prize ;”
This wave shall be the funeral pall,
'Neath which thy bravest foeman lies.
Water lily, water lily, thou art broken from thy
stem.
Pisa's lost the fairest boast
That graced her ocean diadem.”

Marinella put round the helm, and dashed through the middle of the combatants, who suspended their arms as it seemed from sudden astonishment. Casting out a rope, she coiled it to the prow of one of the vessels.

“Now, English John,” she cried, “return to fulfil thy honourable career: fight for the Pisans, and Heaven protect thy arms !”

He leapt on board, and in another moment she disengaged her boat from the galley, commanded Bruno to stand to the sail, and away she steered through the foaming ocean.

On commencement d'Octobre 1362, Perino Grimaldi attaque L'île de Giglio, et soit lacheté de la garnison, soit découragement inspiré par la peste, le chateau qui commande cette Isle, et que les Génois, les Catalans et les Napolitains n'avoient jamais pu soumettre, se rendit à la République Florentine, &c. &c.*

* *Six Vol. Républiques Italiennes, Sismondi, C. xlvii.*
p. 114.

CHAPTER VIII.

Io sento ritornar quel dolce tempo,
Del qual non mi rimembra senza pianti,
Che fu principio alla mia aspra vita ;
Ne' mai dappoi conobbi libertate :
E perchè si rinnova nella mente,
Vuol che io ne faccia tal memoria amore.

Sestina ii.—*Lorenzo de' Medici.*

WHAT a night of contending emotions did Ildegarda pass, after the vision which appeared to her from the temple in the Lariccia Garden ! Was it indeed Ranieri whom she had seen, or had he forgotten and scorned her, and given the scarf, the token of her love, to some other ? No ! it was not possible, she conceived, that he should act so base a part : if, as she had thought,

he resigned her, still he would not insult the affection which she had so devotedly felt for him. And if it were, in good truth, Ranieri who sought her with unchanged heart ; who came to liberate her and claim her as his own for ever, oh ! there was inebriating joy in that thought ; but she had vowed to resign him, had given her solemn promise to his mother, voluntarily given it, never to hold communication with him. Thus did she revolve in her mind the whole train of circumstances which now elated, and now sunk her into the deepest despondence. But the beauteous fabric of her fairy hopes was at once most cruelly dispelled by the arrival of Montescudajo. He approached her with insolent triumph ; professed for her the most unbounded passion ; assured her that she was completely in his power, far from every friend, and that she would do wisely to accede with gentleness to that which she could not possibly prevent by force.

“ In the one case, I will make you my wife ; in the other, I will have unmitigated vengeance.”

“ Never !” cried Ildegarda indignantly, “ never will I become your wife ; and you forget that those who seek for heavenly aid can never be abandoned.”

“ Not humbled yet !” cried Pafetta, and he approached to take her hand.

“ Leave me !” said Ildegarda, terrified, her boasted resolution forsaking her ; “ leave me time to reflect on your proposal.”

“ In twenty-four hours I will return : for your own sake, be wise—not one instant longer will I be made the puppet of your will.”

When he left her, Ildegarda dropped on her knees, and thought the prayer she could not utter.

“ Oh ! Ranieri, Ranieri, if indeed you have sought your unhappy Ildegarda, now, now is the time to snatch her from becoming the prey of the spoiler.”

As she spoke, she thought she saw a panel of her chamber move: it slid noiselessly back, and in a moment Ranieri pronounced the dear and well known words — “*Alla Giornata!*” “There is no time for hesitation,” he said; “I adjure you by every consideration of honour, and of affection, to follow me instantly.”

Ildegarda paused.

“Another moment, and it will be too late.”

“I swore to your mother to have no communication with you; and now, now to fly with you alone, and incur an obligation which nothing but the devotion of my future life can repay,—ought I to do this?”

“Talk not of obligations; think only of your own safety, of what is still dearer to you, of your honour;”—and he added, tenderly pressing her to his heart, “think of my life, it is lost, doubly lost, if you delay.”

Ildegarda rushed on with him through the

aperture by which he had entered ; they closed it after them, and in perfect darkness, with cautious footsteps, he guided her down long stairs, that seemed from the damp cold exhalations to be fathoms deep under ground. Fully two hours did they thread the intricate labyrinths of that fearful place. A few tender monosyllables, now of soothing, now of sweetest and most cheering import, seemed to inspire her with fresh courage, and at length a speck of light shone like a tiny star at a distance from them. To this their footsteps tended ; it expanded as they approached ; and, at length, the waters of a lake rolled gently into the low cave which they had reached : here a boat lay moored.

“ This is the lake of Albano,” said Ranieri, gently lifting her into the boat : “ on the Monte Cavo, the hill opposite, we have friends awaiting us. God grant we may reach it in safety ! and all will be well.”

Ildegarda silently prayed that it might be so ; and while Ranieri's expert arm rowed her swiftly across the quiet waters of the lake, she prayed fervently that their flight might be effected in safety. It was a placid autumnal evening ; not a sound was heard but the stroke of the oar ; they looked at each other, and felt that the whole world to them was vested in their mutual presence—moments of happiness never to be forgotten ! moments, which however obscured by the vanities or ambitions of busy life, however they may be lost and degraded in worldly feelings, do yet arise to memory's view, from time to time, like waters in the desert, soothing and refreshing the weary spirit on its pilgrimage. They reached the shore ; they passed along into the thick and wooded precincts of the Monte Cavo ; they mounted its steep umbrageous rocks, until, after a long toil, Ranieri, seeing his companion almost exhausted with fatigue and excitement, proposed to her to rest.

“ We are safe now ; repose yourself, beloved Ildegarda, repose yourself by me, your affianced husband, your delighted protector, your fortunate liberator.”

She had no power left to controvert these blessed sounds of happiness, and only besought him to tell her how he had ever discovered her abode. With still greater eagerness she inquired how he had obtained access to her, and how he had been able to guide her through the dark and lonely way which led them to light and liberty.

“ Agata is the fortunate instrument by which I was enabled to effect your escape. I observed the whole of that girl’s behaviour the evening when I saw you in the temple ; I followed her lover, obtained from him their history ; bribed him to accede to my wishes by forwarding his own, and learnt all the minute particulars of this subterraneous passage. My having traced you to Lariccia I owe to the directions of one of the men whom you hired to

conduct your litter to the villa at Volterra : he was attached to you, and expressed his abhorrence at the fraud practised upon you during your sleep by Pafetta's worthless agents. In the guise of a pilgrim I was enabled to pass through all the different states in safety, and there is no sanctuary which is not open to this garb. Thus, then, in a few words you have the detail of my adventures ; but what countless volumes would it require to give you the slightest idea of my sufferings, my anxieties, my wretchedness on your account ! the sum of happiness and woe is quickly stated, but its component parts are the thousand lives which torture or delight, and to the description of which years would not suffice." The pressure of the hand which replied to these tender assurances, was the only answer by which they could be replied to ; and now Ranieri, in his turn, sought for an account of Ildegarda's flight from Pisa, and learnt the whole relation with a mixture of

sorrow, surprise, and pleasure, from which it was difficult to single out any separate sentiment.

“Poor Bruno Grillo!” said Ildegarda, “I am sure that it was not his fault your letter was not brought to me in safety from Volterra—that letter which might have spared us such agony; and yet,” she added in a lower tone of voice, “is it not all amply recompensed now?”

“Transporting words!” cried Ranieri; and was about to press her to his heart, when Montescudajo suddenly darted forth from behind the covert of the wood, and made a plunge at him with his knife. Ildegarda cast herself forward, received the stroke in her arm, and, at the same instant, Bruno Grillo, followed by a troop of monks, came pouring down various paths leading from the convent, and rushing towards Pafeta, struggled with him. He cast some of them apparently dead at his feet, and then leaping down from rock to rock, was lost in the leafy solitude. In the agitation of the moment, the

noise of many voices inquiring the cause of this scene of dismay and confusion, the unaccountable appearance of Bruno Grillo, the agitation of Ildegarda, who clung to Ranieri, and would not believe that he had escaped with life, her own situation was at first wholly overlooked; but very soon the stream of blood which poured from the wound in her arm told how severely she had suffered in this momentary but dreadful transaction.

“Gracious Heaven! you are wounded.”

“Yes!—no; I believe a slight wound;” and she sickened with the pain, and faintly pronounced “*Alla Giornata!*” ere she sank insensible in Ranieri’s arms.

Ildegarda was conveyed to the convent, and it lessened much of Ranieri’s wretchedness to find that Fredolfo was, by some wonderful concatenation of events, an inmate there. His skill in surgery, as well as his long and parental friendship for Ildegarda

rendered his presence at such a moment invaluable. The wound in Ildegarda's arm remained for some weeks painful, and it was doubtful if ever she would recover its use; but the beam of happiness which irradiated her destiny, was too splendid not to overcome every corporeal suffering; and there was an indescribable delight in both these lovers' hearts, when the scarf, originally worked by Ildegarda's hand for Ranieri, now served to support that very hand which, under Providence, had saved his life. Who can tell the felicity which all this reflected light of joy shed over these happy beings? Safe within the guardian walls of the convent's precincts, at about a mile from the sanctuary, in the peasant's house, where the farm servants belonging to the community resided,—Ildegarda found herself surrounded by her faithful attendant Bruno Grillo, by Fredolfo her parental adviser, and by him who was all the united world to her; but to such happiness there must

of necessity be a shade; and when Ranieri informed them of the death of Cassini, a heartfelt tribute of sorrow burst forth from every eye.

“It is not now,” Fredolfo said, “that we shall feel this loss most; *it is* a loss which must occur to our hearts in after-times; and which, with an ever-renewing sense of grief in our hours of reflection, will speak volumes to us of the briefness of all things which are merely of earth. But his virtues, his tender goodness, dwell in imperishable regions, and still are reflected back on those who knew him here, to encourage, to invigorate, and to uphold them in their path of rectitude and of honour.” While Ildegarda assented with the truest sympathy to these sentiments, she could not avoid asking herself what duty she was now called upon to fulfil, what happiness to forego; and she took Fredolfo aside, and said to him: “Your child has been taught in a hard school, but I acknowledge that I have been so in mercy; deign once more

to guide me, and I will in future be governed by your good council." She then explained to him the whole state of her mind; avowed that Rachaela had become at one time an object of jealousy, but that, nevertheless, it had been motives of kindness and justice towards the damsel which had induced her to request the Lanfreducci's protection for her. "I reasoned thus:—it shall neither be said, nor shall I have to reproach myself with having been the obstacle to her happiness; if ever Ranieri is brought to love her, it will be a consolation to me in resigning my own happiness, to think that I have been the occasion of her's; and there is something in the sacrifice of self which is gratifying to our nature. Perhaps, however, had my poor little messenger not been waylaid, I might not have had the courage to tear myself from Pisa; but when that wretched miscreant, Montescudajo, persuaded me that Ranieri had become an object of suspicion to the state, owing to my presence and my influence, I gave

up all and fled. Now, Fredolfo, I have not only my own feelings to contend against, but Ranieri's; the question no longer is, whether Ranieri loves me, but whether or not I am to yield to his wishes, and become his wife, without his mother's blessing on our union, or to resist his tender importunities, and await some favourable change in her opinions."

"Never !" he answered, "dearest child ! never marry under a parent's displeasure. The command is not from man, but direct from God, which bids us honour father and mother ; and those who do not obey this command have a curse attached to them, which sooner or later is ever felt. The punishment of our fault does not always come directly upon us : long after our errors and our crimes are perhaps by us forgotten we receive some awful chastisement ; and then only do we look back to them, and acknowledge the justice and mercy of the dispensation. I have a tale to unfold which will

singularly impress upon your mind the truth of what I have now spoken ; let us seek Ranieri, and in his presence I will relate the interesting story which pertains to my existence, and which will in itself speak more eloquently to your feelings than any mere axioms of moral duty can possibly do." Ranieri quickly obeyed the summons, and with great interest they listened to Fredolfo's words.

" My dear children, it is an erring mortal who addresses you : his weaknesses, and, it may be, crimes, shall be displayed for your instruction. In early life I was not destined for the cloister ; I mingled with the world, possessing all those advantages which render it so seductive. High birth and wealth were mine ; I loved and was beloved. I saw in the object of my affection nothing but perfection, and was unprepared for the unavoidable abatement of rapture which ensues in the intimate knowledge of human character, and the daily intercourse of life.

My wife, for she became my wife contrary to my parents' express wishes, was replete with the levities of youth, the vanity of a beautiful, uneducated female. I sought in her those qualities which come in, with such a softening and attaching grace, to keep the captive heart, when the first effervescence of passion subsides : but she disregarded those gentle and homely cares, so necessary to female worth, to domestic happiness. Display, noise, perpetual excitement, and that not of a mental kind, formed the pleasure of her existence and the wretchedness of mine. On this discovery, at first my loneliness of heart was utter desolation ; and then it sunk into indifference. Here was my great crime ; because my wife replied not to my expectations, was I to abandon her ? because *she* forgot her duties, was I to forget *mine* ? Was she not the weaker of the two ? Was not the power vested in me to snatch her from the path of inutility and frivolity, alas ! to snatch her from the gulph of hope-

less disgrace to which these follies lead. It was, *it was*; and deep and long has been my remorse, having neglected so vast a responsibility. At first I felt ashamed to enforce my authority, weak and irresolute that I was!—I was bantered by the gay and the dissolute with whom I mingled, on my attachment to my wife. She herself, unhappy woman! bantered me likewise; my attentions to her in public, above all, seemed to constitute her greatest annoyance; ‘They were contrary,’ she said, ‘to the received customs of the land; they brought down ridicule on us both: you,’ she said, ‘are pointed at as a jealous husband, while *I* am naturally placed on the footing of a suspected wife.’ When my unfortunate Teresa made me this representation, I do her the justice to believe that she was entirely innocent of all unworthy thoughts; but she was not aware that the outworks of virtue once cast down, its citadel remains defenceless—a prey to the spoiler! And who then should have thought

of these things? Was it not I?—her husband, her protector, her rightful master? I loved the arts, I loved literature; above all, I loved dear domestic enjoyment: but not solitary, unloving, and unloved enjoyment. Why did I not endeavour to make her a partner in these my pursuits? Why did I not endeavour to give her a feeling of and taste for those intellectual delights which grow by feeding on. At this dangerous epoch of our life, an artful woman stepped in and overthrew the fabric of our bliss for ever. Her apparent innocence, her seeming love for all that I approved, her artful praises of my wife mingled with insidious poison to mislead my judgment; the contrast that she drew between Teresa's beauty and brilliancy and cold *indifference*, to her own devotion to private duties, to her wishes and aspirations after retirement and home-felt joys, with one being to adore, one to whom all selfish feelings should be sacrificed, were so many representations of felicity to

excite my longings after that happiness, which I had ever looked forward to as the only happiness on earth. Unconsciously I was led to feel that this artful being was necessary to my comfort, while my wife daily became less and less so, except as far as she administered to our perpetual meetings. Various and interminable were the dissipations of Teresa ; she had no time for reflection, and she became the object of attack to all the most dissolute and abandoned of the gay multitude in which we lived. To shorten the melancholy tale :—all the time that I fell into the snare, though pleasure sometimes maddened, remorse often distracted me ; it was an existence of alternate beds of roses or of scorpions.—Could it be called happiness ? God knows it was not such in reality : every now and then, when I beheld Teresa seated by one of her admirers, whom I had most cause to believe she listened to with tenderer interest than the rest, the cold icy feel was at my heart, and the

next instant volumes of flames seemed to scorch my very vitals. At such moments my tempter was ever nigh, soothed my wretchedness with her words, and by her artful insinuations confirmed all the too justly grounded suspicions in regard to Teresa which occasioned my wretched condition. Still I had not the manly courage, the Christian resolution, to snatch Teresa from perdition ; the sound “jealous husband,” perpetually rung in my ears, bound me in its spell, and, together with my own culpable entanglement, led me on step by step further in guilt and wretchedness. At length, Teresa fled with her lover : then the veil dropped from my infatuated eyes—I loathed the woman who had deceived me—I cursed my own folly in bitterness of heart ; I was a truly despicable yet pitiable man. Some wandering years of wretchedness and guilt (and let this humiliating confession expiate, in part, my crimes) followed this cruel event ; at length, one, night returning from an orgie with my dis-

solute companions, I heard the moans of a female voice, and on the pavement beheld a woman lying apparently dying. Touched with compassion, (for the weak of head are often tender of heart,) I removed her to a house for assistance. Gracious Heaven ! in this altered squalid being I recognized Teresa. She lived long enough to tell me, that, soon abandoned by her betrayer, she fell into other hands, and gradually became the lost and miserable creature I behold. Unaccustomed to seek for enjoyment, except in show and dissipation, she sacrificed every thing to obtain it ; until at length severe illness deprived her of the fatal beauty which had been one of the misused advantages that led to her undoing ; so surely do the fairest gifts, if misemployed, become our bane. On the bed of death, when this world and all its allurements fade to nothing, Teresa felt that she loved her husband, and Teresa's husband still loved her. Innocent and virtuous attachment outlives even

the guilt that may have polluted it. ‘We are both criminals,’ I said, embracing her; ‘let our mutual crimes be mutually pardoned.’ ‘You are an angel,’ replied the expiring Teresa, ‘may your virtues plead for me at the throne of mercy!’ and having thus spoken, she died.

“From that time I became an altered creature; through sorrow I was brought to know that man has a higher destination than any this world can bestow. After some years of self-examination, I sought the refuge of the cloister, not as a scene of inactive or morose seclusion, but as one which, if duly fulfilled, would enable me to do good to my fellow-creatures, while it afforded to my wounded spirit a holy calm, a majestic and sublime tranquillity; and where can these characteristics be so divinely impressed upon outward and visible things, as in the sanctuary of Camaldoli? The active business of the community was deputed to me, and frequently I made long journeys to distant countries, in-

trusted with various missions respecting the temporal interests of the brethren. Hence I remained a long time at Pisa, and in the convent of St. Bizio detta Catena I became first acquainted with a young and interesting pensioner. She very soon confided to me all the secrets of her heart, and no father ever felt more tender affection for a child than I did for that unfortunate. Love had taken entire possession of her, and she was wholly unfit to fulfil the duties of a cloistral life. At first, knowing that her parent destined her for that profession, I left no pains unresorted to, in order to turn the current of her thoughts ; but experience had taught me that nothing but self-devotion to such a calling, could sanctify it to one's own or other's benefit. The object of Rachaela's attachment was in every way worthy of creating it ; and the recollection of a happiness which I had once proposed to myself, arose too freshly on remembrance, not to inspire me with the ten-

derest sympathy for these unhappy young creatures ; the more so, because I saw that a steady, and I may say pure and holy flame animated their bosoms : if ever mortals deserved to find happiness in each other, surely it was that youthful pair. And yet ought I to say this—for the blessing of Heaven did not follow their union ? A parent's curse rested upon them—fatal, fatal and never-failing anathema when pronounced against filial disobedience : never was it more strikingly exemplified, and never did the obstinate cruelty of a parent meet with deeper or more lasting punishment. When nothing could be done to dissuade this couple from their resolve, I consented, contrary to all the rules of the church, and at the risk of incurring disgrace and death, to bless their union. There were circumstances attendant upon Rachaela's receiving the vows, which, according to the award of my conscience, rendered them nugatory ; and if still I should suffer for having in-

fringed the rules of our order, I shall suffer joyfully, convinced that I acted in integrity of heart. Two only persons witnessed the marriage of Edward Hawkwood and Rachaela di Montescudajo: in a small chapel on the road to Volterra, in one of the wildest of solitudes they bound themselves by the holiest and happiest of all human vows, and through privations and dangers they remained true till death.

Rachaela's unnatural father became furious as soon as he discovered his daughter's flight, and he went to Avignon to obtain an anathema against Hawkwood from the Pope. On his road thither he was attacked by banditti, in one of whom he recognized a servant of his son,—that son for whose worldly aggrandizement he had sacrificed his innocent unoffending daughter. His own suite saved his life, but the hand of Heaven was upon him, and he cursed himself with a bitterer curse than that which he inflicted on his guiltless daughter. From that day Mon-

tescudajo's reason became impaired, and rapidly the disease increased, till he died raving mad. His wretched son was now master of all that wealth which his ambition and his avarice made him so desirous of obtaining ; but I never heard any one say that these gifts conferred upon him one hour of apparent enjoyment. His restless desire to discover his sister's residence, the furious vengeance which he entertained against her husband, were the scorpions which destroyed his rest. Rachaella's retreat he never did discover, but Hawkwood, who openly followed his martial career, was easily found. Twice Montescudajo attempted to assassinate him, and at length finding that his brother-in-law merely defended his own life, but never would attack his, the coward challenged him, well knowing that challenge never would be accepted. One fatal night they met accidentally, and Montescudajo, taking advantage of his forbearance, rushed upon him, and having repeatedly struck

him with his dagger, he fled, leaving his victim for dead. It chanced that Marinella was at that moment on a mission to Pisa, seeking Radeconda. She found the unfortunate Hawkwood weltering in his blood ; had him conveyed to La Torre, and tended his last moments. A duplicate of his will was faithfully delivered to me, through Marinella's agents, but Marco Paolo having seen Marinella invested with the possessions of La Torre and the contiguous lands, went to Genoa, from whence he has never returned, neither have any tidings been heard of him. The two children that remained of these unfortunate parents, were objects of my tenderest solicitude : but I durst not openly avow the interest I took in them, lest, by so doing, I might betray the fact of their existence, to those who would not have scrupled to compass their destruction. It was my earnest wish, nevertheless, to procure some situation for the little Rachaella, more eligible than that in which she was placed ; and

the trait of character which I heard related of her, when I made known the story to you, Cara Signora, (addressing Ildegarda,) was such, as to justify my endeavours to obtain for her the advantage of being under your protection.

“ When I saved Marinella’s life, by administering an antidote to the poisonous drug she had swallowed, I obtained from her the most sacred promise, that wherever I might be, she would inform me when any momentous circumstance should occur to the children, either relative to the discovery of their birth, or to their immediate safety ; and then I said, if the sacrifice of myself can ensure these dear innocents the permanent advantages of their birth or fortunes, I shall not hesitate to come openly forward, and make known the whole truth ; but till I do so, I seal your lips symbolically with a signet ring ; which ring keep, and till you send it me, together with a lock of your hair, and I again return it to you, you are never to un-

fold their story to mortal ear. Pranzetti, Montescudajo's servant, has now brought me the ring and the lock of hair : something of infinite consequence must have befallen the children, and I feel it my duty to lose no time in repairing to the Isola della Gorgona."

Here Fredolfo paused ; his auditors had been deeply interested in his history, and several times during its narration their tears and emotion gave undoubted testimony of the vivid feelings it had elicited. And now it was Ranieri's part to detail what had befallen him from the time he parted with Ildegarda ; a detail of which Ildegarda herself was never weary, and which came quite new to the ears of Fredolfo. Bruno Grillo was called upon to approach, and desired to relate circumstantially all that had come to his knowledge ; a command which he obeyed very distinctly, and in a manner that would have rendered his story interesting, even if its matter had not been as spi-

rit-stirring as it really was. He concluded by saying that Marinella had ordered him, when she landed him at Ostia, to pursue his way directly to Monte Cavo, there to seek Fredolfo, and implore him in her name to go to Lariccia, on such a day, at such an hour, and demand admittance to view the Palace, attended by the stoutest brethren of the convent. "We were rather later than the time she prescribed, and I was hurrying on, when I beheld from the height a man following two persons through the wood, in a suspicious manner, long before we were near the spot where they were. The lady and her companion sat down, apparently in earnest conversation, and just as I came near them, the monster sprung from his lair, and the dreadful catastrophe is known to you."

"Verily, Bruno Grillo, thou hast been my guardian page, and it will rejoice the good dear Radegonda to hear how thou hast proved the means of saving thy mistress's life."

“ It is, in truth, a wonderful concatenation of events,” rejoined Fredolfo, “ and is altogether most visibly the ordinance of Heaven. That Montescudajo should have escaped, is a very unfortunate circumstance ; for so long as that archfiend remains on earth, we are none of us sure of our lives ; but though Heaven’s vengeance may appear slow to us, weak judging mortals, it is certain ; and never will so hard-hearted a criminal evade the punishment due to his atrocity. It is now time that the evil which he meditated bringing down on the guiltless, should recoil upon himself, and that very man who set a price upon Edoardo’s head, shall now have a price set upon his own. Here have been sufficient witnesses of his intention to perpetrate a deed of murder, and that it did not take its full effect was not for want of will on the part of the assassin ; nay, as it is, one of the brethren has fallen a sacrifice to his attempt at detaining him, for this very day he is dead of the wounds he received in wrestling with him.”

During Ildegardā's recovery she had no want of subjects to discuss with her friends ; the circumstances of their lives afforded a perpetual source of instructive and interesting matter ; and the delight of being once again restored to the society of him who possessed her fondest affections was so great, that she thought, could she have prolonged this life for ever, it would have been the perfection of happiness. In a rude habitation in the middle of a wood, without any of those objects of art or luxury to which she had been accustomed, absent from the crowd of obsequious adulators, but in the presence of the chosen of her heart,—what, in fact, had she to wish for? Yet it was satisfactory to be thus self-assured of the nature of her own desires, and to have her sense of true felicity confirmed to herself.

“ Yes,” she said to Ranieri, “ I am happy, but I must not rest in this happiness ;—Ermene-

gilda!" and she looked all that she had not the power to utter.

"You are right," dearest Signora, "and I have provided a galley to take us from the port of Ostia," rejoined Fredolfo: "we must go there as quickly as possible. Those who act from principle make no mistakes, and ultimately they are rewarded. Hope the best; my prayers and my wishes attend you; let us seek the Lanfreducci, and our united entreaties and tears must prevail."

"They must, they shall," triumphantly cried Ranieri; and the next day they left the beautiful Monte Cavo, traversed its extensive woods with mingled feelings of admiration and dismay, and taking the road for the port under the protection of Fredolfo and a deputation of priests from the convent, they bade adieu to this eventful scene.

CHAPTER IX.

FIDELITY.

“ Le chien, indépendamment de la beauté de sa forme, de sa vivacité, de sa force, de sa légèreté, a par excellence toutes les qualités intérieures qui peuvent lui attirer les regards de l’homme. Un naturel ardent, colère même féroce et sanguinaire, rend le chien *sauvage*, redoutable à tous les animaux, et cède dans le chien domestique aux sentimens les plus doux. Nulle ambition, nul intérêt, nul désir de vengeance, nulle crainte que celle de déplaire ; il est tout zèle, toute ardeur et toute obéissance.”

BUFFON.

ON the day when the English *Falcone* so suddenly took his flight from the Isola della Gorgona, Rachaela for the first time acknowledged a greater interest in him, than she had

ever been previously aware of having entertained: that he should have left her without one word of courtesy was a conduct she could not account for; and had not the spirit of offended pride sustained her, the bereavement of his society which she so deeply felt would have vented itself in a far different and softer effusion than by the few expressions of surprise and displeasure which escaped her. When she sat down that evening by Ermenegilda, to perform her usual duties of reading aloud, the page seemed to float with confused characters before her eyes; she pronounced one word for another, stopped in the wrong place, and made the sense of the author quite unintelligible. At length, finding it impossible to go on, the excuse of a head-ache, that universal benefactor to all minor distresses, obtained her dismissal, and she hastened to seek in the open air a relief to the oppression of her feelings. Her faithful Volterran dog, who never left her footsteps,

seemed on the present occasion to put forth all his powers of pleasing; now jumping up to catch her hand, which hung listlessly by her side, now running before, and bringing her a large tangled mass of sea-weed attached to a stone, which he did all but ask her, to throw for his sport. These and a thousand other gambols the faithful intelligent Mago practised in vain. At length his mistress sat down on the point of a rock that jutted far out into the sea, and as her eyes wandered over the trackless ocean they filled with tears. The dear dog was not an indifferent spectator to his mistress's sorrows. Those who love and study these wonderful animals are well aware that in these dumb companions they have found frequently more sympathy than from their fellow-beings: the link which binds them to us is one of those mysteries which cannot be explained, but which it is grateful to the feelings and ima-

gination frequently to consider. Yes, Mago knew that his loved mistress was sorrowful, and knowing it, he became sorrowful also. Down he lay, as it were, sighing at her feet, as though he would have uttered, "I wish I could cheer you."

"Poor Mago, dear dog!" cried Rachaela, caressing him; and the consciousness that he loved her, while it pleased, excited the tender weakness of tears: but this indulgence was checked by the distant appearance of Radegonda; her garments spread out by the wind, and her ample hood swelled out to an enormous size.

"Come home, I say, child, come home, it is no longer summer weather; the air is very biting, and shrivels up my poor skin on my bones; it cannot be good for you to be staying here at this time of the night—and what for, I wonder?"

During this speech she was hobbling as fast as she could to Rachaela, over the large loose stones.

“ Well, dear nurse, be pacified, I will soon return home ; but rest yourself a while, and let me enjoy the evening breeze, which is very refreshing.”

“ Ah ! well, to be sure, after such a long walk as I have had, (sitting down,) a little rest is necessary. To be sure I do not wonder that such young creatures as you should find it dull to be always reading and writing, and poring over books : I never could abide any of these things, not I. Education is terribly neglected now a-days : why in my time, every lady knew how her table should be spread, whether to her serving-men, or to the highest of the State knights and Signors ; and then, as for receipts, why a thousand was nothing to have at one’s fingers’ ends. Many a wonderful cure I have made, and many an excellent dinner I have cooked ;

and though I do not say you should cook the dinner yourself, I do say you should see to it. Why there is not a more sure way of keeping a man's heart than by keeping a good table and an orderly house; and how do you think this is to be done without the wife's eye looks to it? Do I not know that when a knight comes in tired from war, or turmoil, or the chase, what he likes best to find is a board well spread, and next to that, a wife well dressed, to please his eyes; and then his stomach and his eyes being well recreated, you may have every thing your own way: but your husband will never be a bit the better pleased with you for knowing who reigned here and who reigned there, or what poet sung at this time, or what at that; not that I have any objection to a good, merry, or a pretty tender song now and then between whiles, only they must not come in *before* meals." Mercy on me! my poor dear mistress there, Ildegarda, how she lost her time; oh! sweet nurs-

ling, had you only taken my advice ! but, poor dove, I marvel where thou art wandering now ?”

“ Where thou shalt never find her,” cried a fierce voice ; and several men leaped from a small boat which had lain unperceived among the fragments of the rocks. In an instant they seized Radegonda and Rachaella, and carrying them into the bark, held their hands upon their faces to stifle their cries, and put to sea with a favourable wind, that soon carried them into the open ocean. Rachaella’s first care, after having ascertained Radegonda’s safety, on finding herself at liberty to look round her, was to ascertain whether Magò was with her or not ? He was, — the faithful creature lay at her feet. The six men who rowed the boat were apparently mariners, or rather fishermen, of the coarsest, lowest class. One of them, however, was of different mould, though in the same garb. Rachaella looked at him attentively, and then she exclaimed “ Montescudajo ! is it possible ? Thank

Heaven !” and she flung herself on her knees before him. The most ferocious of human beings have occasionally some touch of natural feeling in their hearts ; and the confiding trust of this young and innocent creature,—it may be, too, the secret workings of these indefinable sensations which nature has twined round the hearts of those linked by ties of consanguinity,—made him raise her up with some show of pitying tenderness, as he said—

“ Rachaella, thou art a harmless good girl, and if thou remainest quiet, I mean no further violence to thee ; but be obedient and silent. As for that old crone yonder, let her look to herself, she has done mischief enough in her day ; but the time being past, provided she is humble and quiet, no harm will happen to her either.”

These were encouraging words in their present circumstances ; and Rachaella, with that fine tact which is peculiar to woman, pressed

her suit no farther than by tacit but grateful acknowledgment of these commands. All that night they were at sea, for the wind sank, and a great calm ensued. Towards morning the breeze freshened, and they came to the mouth of a river, which Radegonda immediately recognized as being the Foce del Serchio: she whispered to Rachaella, that she was in the midst of friends, and when she found they were going to a small place called Nodica, she was very near betraying her delight. Arrived there, they were ordered to disembark, and Montescudajo taking the arm of Radegonda, while one of the other men conducted Rachaella, they proceeded to a lonely farm-house. It was a straggling, graceless building, surrounded on three sides by a deep and wide ditch, kept carefully supplied with water in order to irrigate the rice-lands which abound there; and on the fourth there was a very high palisado topped with iron spikes. The naked flatness of the coun-

try, its absence of trees, and the desolate forlorn look of the crumbling building, conveyed no sentiment to the beholder save that of mistrust and melancholy ; devoid of any of the sublimity of romance which is sometimes attached to places of a similar character. A man, whose unsightly appearance corresponded with this abode, greeted their approach in surly accents, looking at the females from the corner of his eyes, and making some coarse jests to his other five companions. He was large of limb, brawny and hirsute ; but from the waist upwards he was deformed in so marvellous and terrific a manner, that when he walked one might have fancied him moving away, while in fact he was approaching ; his eyes were singularly small and sunk in his head, overshadowed by red and bushy eyebrows ; his lips large and protuberant ; his cheeks hanging ; and his large head scarcely seemed connected by any throat, but was apparently stuck on to the distorted

body. Such was the creature into whose care Montescudajo consigned the innocent Rachaella.

“Oh ! leave me not,” she cried, “not with him, the fearful one. Stay with me, stay with me ; or take me with thee !” and in an agony of grief and terror, she clung to Montescudajo.—Montescudajo was not insensible to woman’s gentleness : if any thing is calculated to move the most stubborn heart, it is surely a woman’s pleading helplessness.

“I solemnly promise you, Rachaella, that no harm shall happen to you ; that I will return ere long, and bring you society that you will love : trust to me, and you shall not have to repent doing so.”

“I do trust to you, indeed I do ; but to him,” pointing to the peasant—“oh ! hide me, hide me from him !”

“Be pacified, thou silly damsel ; he dare not hurt thee. What, does the villain laugh ?” ques-

tioned Montescudajo, turning to him and observing signals to his companions.

“Hark ye ! remember, sirrah, your life is in my hands, and your delivering this girl back to me in perfect safety, with an assurance from herself that you have fulfilled my orders, is the only means which can secure it to you.”

“Wretched, wretched day !” cried Radegonda, wringing her hands.

“Hold your silly prate ; comfort the damsel, be of good cheer, keep yourself perfectly quiet, and all will be well.” So saying, he tore himself from the imploring Rachaella, and departed.

The despair of Radegonda had a favourable effect on Rachaella. If the expression of any passion, be it even that of authorized fear, passes a prescribed and just limit, it is wonderful how it deadens sympathy. Rachaella began to think, that even the loss of life itself would not justify such vociferous complaints, and she endeavoured to soothe Radegonda into a calm

endurance of what so lately had seemed to herself insufferable.

“It is surprising,” said Radegonda, gradually recovering her senses, “how much wisdom you young creatures have at times ; and then at other’s how silly you are. Why if you had not gone singing to the mermaids at that undue hour of midnight, we should never have been thus stolen away : and yet, now that the misfortune has happened, you bear it better than I do myself. Well, well ! *ci vuol pazienza.*”

The prisoners now betook themselves to needful rest, and they had no further cause of alarm for some succeeding days. They were well served and attended, and Radegonda began to be reconciled to her situation, only now and then lamenting her dear Bruno Grillo, and her lost nursling.

“Oh ! when were all things given ?” she cried ; “but my child, my dear beautiful Bruno, never

can I know happiness until I clasp thee to my bosom."

One day Ugo asked them if they would like to take a walk; Rachaela answered, "Yes, if we may walk alone, not otherwise."

"You must be content to have my company; if you consider me nobody, then you will be alone;" and he laughed coarsely. Radegonda made signs to Rachaela to accept the proposition; and the latter consented.

"Do you know," whispered Radegonda, "that a few, very few miles from hence, I have many friends and acquaintance; and who knows but if we are civil to this terrible Ugo, he may frequently allow us to go out; in which case, never fear, the bird's wings are only clipped, and in good time, with Heaven's aid, they may grow again."

They now prepared to follow Ugo; but he said, "No, no! an arm for each," and he made

them pass theirs through his own. Rachaela sickened at the dreadful approximation.

“Come,” he said, “don’t be so squeamish ; I will show you some good sport: we are going a-fishing,” and again he laughed.

“I do not like fishing,” replied Rachaela.

“No matter for that, you must go ; for *I* am going, and I do not choose to leave you here alone : besides, you never saw such fishing as this is in all your lifetime.”

It was a relief to gain even a shadow of liberty ; and as they approached the clear and joyous-looking waters of the Serchio, many a fond thought of past days crowded in Rachaela’s mind. When they reached the margin of the stream, they observed several men posted at opposite sides of the river, curiously habited in clothes that completely concealed their persons.

“Who are these ?” said Radegonda.

“They are the fishermen,” answered Ugo ;

and now they beheld masses floating on the river.

“ There they come ; ha ! ha ! ha ! ” laughed Ugo ; “ there come the large fish ; now see how they will be caught ; ” and first one man nearest to them stretched out an immense long pole with an iron hook fixed to the end of it ; but the mass floated away, carried by the current to the opposite side, and then they observed the eagerness of the person stationed there to profit by this circumstance, and haul it towards himself. There were shouts of success and joy echoed back from one of these men to the other, as if some wondrous prize had been obtained, while curses from the disappointed person rent the air with terrific and blasphemous sounds. Very quickly came two or three more of these floating masses collected together by the circling eddies of the stream, and, as it were, adhering to each other : fresh bursts of noise were reiterated, and Ugo,

letting go the arms of his companions, darted forward, as if unable to resist the temptation, and with an instrument which lay on the river's brink, apparently for the purpose, he pulled one of these bundles to shore—terrific, never-to-be-forgotten sight!—it was a bloated human body! He proceeded to rifle its garments with some smaller implements with which he was provided, and spared no curses when he found there was no spoil; exclaiming, as he pushed it back into the Serchio, “There go, poison the fishes; thou art only good for that.”

“Merciful Heaven!” cried Rachaela, “let us, I implore you, return back to our prison. What are these fearful sights?—why are we brought to witness them?”

“Do you not know that the plague is at Pisa, and that they are flinging the bodies in the river by hundreds a-day, and sometimes there is good picking to be had from them, if they have died without any relations near them:

they are often well laden, and bring a good profit. Our dress is well adapted for the business—the pitch and tar is an inch thick upon it.”

“ But is this,” said Rachaela, “ your promised care of us? Why, at this moment, the hand of death may be upon us, and you may thus have murdered us. Depend upon it, this will be known, and you will yet rue the day.”

“ Well, well, I thought to divert you; but since you make such a noise about it, get ye home, and it will be long enough ere Ugo again tries to do you a favour.”

They retraced their steps with the feeling that they should probably never survive the effects of this dreadful vicinity. Rachaela, with great gentleness and resignation, prepared for death; she prayed very fervently, and then actively employed herself in taking those precautions against infection which she had heard described. The acid of the grape was burnt with charcoal fires and fumigations of their own cy-

press wood, mingled with aromatic herbs, peculiar to the country, was constantly used by them. It pleased God to bless these means, simple as they were, in the midst of an infected atmosphere; this one melancholy cheerless spot was defended from the ravages of the unseen enemy, and like an ark of refuge, they felt gradually secure within its precincts. What thankfulness did not this create ! what trust in the immediate providence of Heaven ! But they had soon to exercise their trust and faith anew, for Ugo came to them in a furious rage, declaring that Montescudajo was the meanest dog in the world; that he had not paid him for the trouble he had had with them.

“ Verily,” said he, “ I believe he is angry that thou art not dead of the pestilence ; and finding thee still alive, he is become weary of the expense thou art the occasion of to him, and takes this method to let me make what use I will of thee. Well, be it so ! thou

art a pretty girl, Rachaella, and if I have spent a few *scudi* in giving thee dainties, and supplying thee with the best the country affords, I do not grudge it thee, so long as thou wilt consent to live with me;" and he began to make love to the disgusted and terrified damsel. Rachaella attempted to fly; he held her fast, she sickened in his grasp, when her faithful Mago, hearing her cry, flew to the spot, and violently assaulted the ruffian. It was a question which would gain the victory, the man or Mago, for the former had turned upon the dog, and with his giant strength repelled his attacks, when the sound of horses' feet came clattering to the palisade.

"Open, open!" cried many horsemen, and a party of English Condottieri dashed down the gate, and rushed into the house.

"Save my dog," cried Rachaella, as the monster Ugo prepared to hurl him against the stone-walls. Ugo was secured—the dog liberated—Rachaella lifted her hands to Heaven, and fell

insensible into the arms of John Hawkwood, the *Falcone*.

“ This passes all belief !” exclaimed he, as soon as Rachaela’s returning senses gave her back to the consciousness of her happiness.

“ Blessed be all the saints !” ejaculated Radegonda, “ for the end of this tragedy ; but we have not done with it yet : here we are in the midst of a pestiferous air, and we may be every one of us dead by to-morrow.” “ Nay, good nurse,” said Rachaela, “ we who have experienced the especial care of Providence must not thus give way to despair. We have been wonderfully protected hitherto ; and now, whatever betides us as to life or death, we may be grateful for our liberation from the hands of the monster Ugo. Relate to me, Signor, I beseech you, how it chanced that you came to us in our hour of need ?—and, (she added, reddening with transient vexation, as the thought of his abrupt departure from the Isola recurred

to her memory) “relate also why you left us in so uncourteous a manner.”

With a frankness which at once obtained the pardon of her whom he addressed, he told her the whole truth ; and when he recounted the Strega’s conduct, repeated her wild unpremeditated lays, her something above mortal deportment, Rachaelle said, with a thoughtful air, “ Ah ! Marinella holds the keys of my destiny, and till she wills it, I shall never know the truth : but how ended the battle of the Giglio ? ”

“ As to that, the Pisans had lost the place ere we arrived ; but certainly the appearance of the Strega’s boat, circling around the combatants, then dashing through the midst of them, had the effect of dispersing and terrifying both parties, so that the poor remains of the Pisan mariners were saved—a circumstance which could not have happened had they continued to strive with such an unequal force. No

sooner was I moored in the Pisan port, than I heard the plague was supposed to have attacked the place. This dreadful news suspended all further idea of warfare, and every precaution was taken both by those without and within the city, to stop its progress, in vain ; the contagion has spread, and the banks of the Serchio are ravaged by the scourge. But it has been discovered that many persons have been wantonly murdered, and the bodies flung into the river, in order to obtain plunder. The very man whom we have now taken up is supposed to be at the head of this iniquitous band of miscreants. Owing to this discovery I was sent hither with a troop of horse to rid the world of such a crew ; and I bless Heaven that in doing so I have been made the fortunate instrument of rescuing you, Signora, from peril ! But when I reflect what a situation you are still in, I tremble for you ; no vessels are now

allowed to pass the Pisan ports ; and it will be difficult, if not impossible, to procure any boat in which to convey you hence. Nay, if we could procure a bark to take us away, where should we find a place of refuge ?”

“ I am content to remain here,” answered Rachaela, blushing ; and these few words were interpreted by the tender wishes of him to whom they were addressed, as the forerunners of hope and joy.

“ And I, likewise,” he replied, “ should be more than contented, did I not tremble for *your* safety.”

“ He who has hitherto so strikingly borne me through every danger will not desert me now ; it is my business to await his behests patiently.”

“ For the matter of that, sweet, no one was ever more patient than Radegonda ; for when I am foaming with rage, I always say, *Ci vuol pa-*

zienza! but I think it a sad hard matter, for all that, that we should be condemned to stay in this church-yard, for it is no better. Oh! if my good little beautiful boy, Bruno, was here, what would he not do for us? Why did I ever let him go with La Strega? It is not the first time she has got me into trouble; but I know not how it is that strange being always had a power over me which I could not resist."

"Do not speak disrespectfully of Marinella, I beseech thee, dear nurse: remember that she tended my infant years, and I am attached to her in a way difficult to describe; still it is attachment. The idea, too, of the dear Edoardo is always associated with her name; and, oh! why have I forgotten so long to inquire for that cherished being? Did you see Edoardo?" turning to the *Falcone*; "I am told he has shown himself to be as gallant in fight, as he is gentle and delightful in domestic life."

Falcone's cheeks reddened at these praises, and he replied with somewhat of displeasure in his accent, "That young knight is become a surprising favourite with my kinsman, and, I really think, to the exclusion of all else, which is a partial preference not easily to be borne. I am too sincere, Signora, not to avow that whatever this young adventurer's merits may be, it is somewhat hard to feel myself superseded by him in a relation's affections."

"Ah! if you but knew Edoardo, how noble, how generous, how disinterested he is, I am certain you would like him as much, I was about to say, as I do; only I believe that to be impossible; but you would certainly like him as much as you say the English captain does."

"As well as you do! that indeed, Signora, as you observe, would be quite impossible; and I doubt very much if the last part of your supposition is not very improbable." So saying,

the *Falcone* turned away, and the discourse ended.

From that time the naturally gay spirits of the young Englishman drooped, and, although his attentions to Rachaela were unremitting, he avoided her presence, and kept as much apart from her as it was possible to do in the confined place wherein they resided.—On her side, Rachaela conceived, that whatever predilection he might have entertained for her had entirely subsided, and ascribed the alteration in his behaviour to every circumstance except the true one. Radegonda found her one day weeping, and she vainly tried to hide her tears by caressing Mago.

“Mago ! dear Mago !” she said, “how I love thee ; and I have every reason to love thee ; for didst thou not save my dear Edoardo’s life, and hast thou not now saved mine ?”

“Ay,” said Radegonda, “very true ; the

beast is a good beast, but he is not a Christian ; and methinks you might spare some of your sugared words for Radegonda, to whom, though thou dost not know it, thou hast great obligations also. However, let that pass ; some time or other I may have it in my power to let you know wonderful things, but for the present I will only tell you joyful news—Edoardo will be here to-day. *Falcone* wrote to his relative to recal him to Pisa, and to send Edoardo in his place, and English John was off this morning before sunrise.”

Rachaella’s first emotion was that of joy ; but the next moment a cloud of heavy thought obscured that brilliant expression.

“ Why, what would you have, young damsel ? you are crying at one moment for what you seem to be careless of the next ; I never saw such caprice. Come, come ; your old nurse will not tease you longer. I know all about it ; and

if you leave the matter to me, please Heaven to keep the infection from us, I will set all to rights;—never fear, trust to *me*. And here he comes, the noble Edoardo! see where he steps! the glorious creature!” One other instant, and the parted children rushed into each other’s arms.

CHAPTER X.

THE SCENE CLOSES.

Appena udì quell' ultima parola
Che infellonito in suo furore gli immerse
Il vindice coltello entro la gola ;

L' altro le braccia moribonde aperse
Ed, atterollo, e alla fatal ruina
Lo trascinò, ch' entrambi gli disperse.

Il grifagno Sparvier, l' Aquila alpina
Fan pasto di lor membra maledette,
Chi per tema il pastor, non s' avvicina.

Versi Improvvisati da Tommaso Sgricci.

ABOUT the time when Montescudajo intercepted Ranieri's letter to Ildegarda, the circumstance of the writings found in the cellar at La Torre, which had totally escaped his recollection, now returned with the most aggravated power to terrify and astound him. It is a common remark, that in all evil transactions the slightest and easiest to be avoided oversight is precisely that by which crime is generally de-

tected: the great leading features of the crime have been all provided for, but the turning of a feather or a glove, or something equally trivial, has frequently brought the whole iniquitous story to light.

Montescudajo had actually followed Ildegarda half-way to Lariccia, when the remembrance of his oversight struck him with all its probable train of events; and trusting Ildegarda's safe custody to the persons whom he had provided for that purpose, he returned with all imaginable speed to Pisa. Owing to this fortunate delay, Ildegarda remained unmolested for some weeks at Lariccia. Great was Pafetta's dismay on discovering that Pranzetti and Bruno Grillo had both escaped from prison, and that no trace whatever of the papers were to be found. In this dilemma, furious with rage and disappointment, he determined that Ildegarda should at least not avoid his vengeance; and he returned to Lariccia again on the morning of the very day when

Ranieri most opportunely came to their assistance. Sickening even at his own villany, he did not intend to imbrue his hands deeper in blood ; but, fired with jealousy by the tender nature of the conversation he overheard in the wood of La Cava between Ildegarda and Ranieri, when he pursued them in their flight thither, his impetuous passions urged him to the terrible attempt of murdering his rival. In order to avoid being taken, from the natural impulse of self-preservation he found himself obliged to strike the man with his dagger, who was very near overcoming him, and then by a rapid flight through the woods, the most secret paths of which he was well acquainted with, he got clear away, reached the coast, hired a small felucca, and made sail for the Isola della Gorgona, determining to carry off Rachaela and Radegonda, and detain them as hostages for his own safety.

Fortune favoured this scheme, as has been already recounted ; and in the swampy lands of

- the Focé del Cerchio, in that lone unwholesome tenement, guarded by the terrible Ugo, he left his prey, secure, as he thought, in order to return and silence for ever the possible claims Edoardo might have to a share of his possessions, as well as to do away all the memorials which existed of his *guilt*.

In order to attain his end, Pranzetti must be discovered, and means resorted to for making him restore the writings. With this view, he retraced his way; and, in the garb of a Capuchin friar, bound on a pilgrimage to Rome, he returned to the very scene of his late-committed crimes. He avoided all unnecessary communication, but warily endeavoured to find out how far his present habit disguised him. By accident, the first person he conversed with was Pranzetti. "*Caro Frate*," said the latter, accosting him, "I am a poor sinner, who require all your indulgence; and to-night, in the confessional, I will make you a faithful avowal of my crimes,

if you will only give me indulgence and pardon."

Having spoken thus, he pressed some *paolis* into the supposed friar's hand, who readily agreed to what was demanded of him, on condition that the confession should be made in the Cappelletta d'ogni Santi, on the highest pinnacle of the rock of Monte Cavo. This was complied with, and they met at the hour appointed.

"I have sinned, I have sinned, I have sinned," said the wretched Pranzetti, "by thought, word, and deed. I stole my master's goods; and, on every occasion I could, I exchanged his effects into gold. He had a singular love for me, and I returned his confidence with hatred; for I knew in my younger days that he had won the heart of a damsel whom I loved *con furore*; but he, only as the passing fancy of a moment. *She disappeared*, and was never heard of more; every one forgot her, save him whom *she* forgot. But Pranzetti never forgets an in-

jury :”— and he ground his teeth together so that their pressure was heard. “ One day he brought me a number of writings, and these I also converted into money ; I sold them to the English captain, Hawkwood.”

Montescudajo repressed some stifled curses, which came like groans to the ears of Pranzetti.

“ *Santo Padre*, I know I have been very wicked ; *ma un si giusto vendetta* cannot offend Heaven. I was telling you that I sold these papers ; and then I went to La Strega di Toscana, to consult her in what manner I should best prosecute my design. She gave me a mission to Fredolfo, saying, if I performed it faithfully, I should obtain my desire.”

Montescudajo shuddered. “ You are shocked, *Santo Padre* ; but place yourself in my circumstances, and you will know that it is only natural to feel as I do. Now all I want of you is to bestow on me *Indulgentia plenaria* for the next hundred days, and if in that time my

vengeance is not satiated, *mine* be the destruction I meditate for *him*."

"Thine be it then, miscreant!" cried Pafetta, springing out of the confessional, as tossing back his cowl, he stood before Pranzetti.

"Montescudajo, by all the saints! Now, if thou failest me," drawing his knife, "may perdition seize La Strega!" They paused, and looked at each other in proud defiance, then rushed together in mortal combat: long did they strive. At length Pranzetti retreated, as if overcome with sudden faintness. Montescudajo waited to draw breath, when, with the supple strength of the tiger, Pranzetti sprang forward on his foe, and buried his knife in Pafetta's throat. He gave one deadly groan, at the same instant enlacing his arms around his adversary, rolled with him headlong over the rocky precipice on whose brink they stood. From stone to stone, and rock to rock, the bodies bounded and rebounded high in air till their disfigured

forms rested on the earth their lives had too long disgraced. The screams of the mountain eagles conducted the hunters of these birds to where the bodies lay, and in process of time the details of the dreadful fact were guessed at, and related.

CHAPTER XI.

CONCLUSION.

Il di che costei nacque, eran le stelle,
Che producon fra voi felici effetti,
In luoghi alti ed eletti
L'una ver l'altra con amor converse.

.

Il sol mai più bel giorno non aperse.

.

Petrarcha, canzone, xliv.

It was a fine October morning when Ildegarda, Ranieri, Fredolfo, and Bruno Grillo, embarked at Ostia to sail for the Isola Della Gorgona. As the shores of the Roman territories lessened to their view, their feelings of love to home became more powerful; for home is the magnetic attraction to every happy breast; the wretched or the guilty, only, loathe its sacred precincts. Whatever excitement of pleasure (and that there is much no vivid imagination can deny) exists in travel, the intimate and na-

tural affections of the human heart circle round the land of our forefathers wherever that land may lie ; and those who find no satisfaction, no soul-felt endearment in their own country, by their own hearths, will find none elsewhere. But it is, nevertheless, these very persons who are most alive to the delicious impressions of novel scenery, novel climate, and all the charm which great associations of the past throw over the present. These associations come softened through an atmosphere of distance, and there is a complacency arises in the mind from the very attempt to grasp these gigantic events, and to measure them with the compass of our own peculiar views and feelings. No two persons read the same page alike ; and the page of nature, so varied, so interesting, so endless in its combinations, who would wish to peruse it, confined to one little spot of the globe alone ?

“ No !” thought Ildegarda as her eye wandered over that mighty shore on whose coasts

she was sailing ; “ let me often leave my home, that I may lose no sense of the freshness of that love I bear it.” It is difficult to suppose any situation where two beings really attached can feel themselves so completely dependent upon one another, so cut off from all the world beside, as when bounding through the ocean wave ; and those only who have truly loved can know what a supreme and pure joy exists in the hearts of such persons at such a moment. Ranieri wished that very hour could be prolonged to a lifetime ; but the chain, the binding chain, which fastens humanity to the task it is designed to fulfil, soon checks these lawless desires (for *here they are lawless*), and brings them back to duty and to care. The thread is mixed of every earthly web ; we cannot change its texture, but we may beautify its colours by the tints we shed upon its surface.

Ranieri adverted to his mother, spoke of the enjoyment of being once again pressed to her

maternal heart, " Surely," he said, taking Ildegarda's hand, " she will not dissever those whom Heaven itself has joined. Surely we go to prove that bliss is sweeter from having been mingled with woe ; at all events, we have not lived without our share of happiness : to some much may be comprised within a short space of time, which to others is diffused over a more extended surface."

" My dear friend, *we* need not complain ;" and in the answering pressure of Ranieri's hand, she received the assurance dearest and most precious to her.

Towards mid-day, the master of the galley came towards them, and looking upwards, he said, " I see the clouds driving fast to leeward, and here are the old Strega's chickens squeaking about : I should not wonder if we had a bit of a squall anon ; see there, look !" and he pointed to certain dark shadows that came running as it were under the waves, a long distance off. " It

will not be any thing to speak of, only we must keep to our oars, and lower the sail, and have all snug ready to meet it." In another quarter of an hour, the visitor he had announced came in good earnest; the vessel laboured through the heavy wave, the mast creaked, and the wind blew as it were from all the points of the compass at once. Ildegarda clung to the arm of Ranieri, and poor little Bruno turned pale; the heavens became blacker and blacker, and now the rain descended in torrents, and swept the ocean in long sheets, intermingled with driving hail."

"This is rough weather for the Signora," said the steersman, "what think ye, Signor?" addressing the captain of the galley: "what think ye of laying to under Elba—she may be frightened?" looking significantly at Ildegarda. The fact was, he was frightened himself.

"I do not know but it may be as well."

Now came the pitching of the galley fore and aft,

and the heavy roll of the sea, which seemed to toss the vessel in every direction at the same moment. Poor Fredolfo and Bruno were carried away speechless; but Ildegarda, though not without alarm, felt undefinable pleasure in being thus linked together with Ranieri in danger. The rocky shore of Elba rose like a dark wall before them, and, ever and anon, the tempest careered in glorious majesty of rage athwart the galley, her very sides trembling to the dashing of the heavy wave. In a moment, as though by magic, the storm rushed by them; the Heavens brightened to their own dense vivid blue; the dark clouds changed to a light flickering white, which sometimes revolved into the boldest forms of dazzling brightness, sometimes spread themselves out like the draperies of a transparent veil.

“ I knew it would come, and it may come again; but 'tis gone now, and all is right—hoist sail, and away!” Rapidly they cleft the wave; a shower of diamonds seemed dancing on

the sunny side of their course; and the foam of the ocean wreathed round the vessel's prow. The sailors busied themselves with decorating a little image, representing the Virgin in a ship. It was nailed to the mast; and each one taking the hand of the other, and forming a circle round, sung to it the following song:—

Lady of grace! all thanks to thee;
Lo! we humbly bend the knee:
We, the sons of the foaming brine,
Thus consecrate thy ocean shrine.
Clear the skies, and smooth the main,
And bear us to our homes again.

Lady of grace! all thanks to thee,
Honour and benedicite!

Merrily on the wave we go,
Rocking softly to and fro;
We, the rude children of thy care,
Guarded by thee all perils dare.
And now we mount the billows steep,
And now descend the surges deep.

Lady of grace! our thanks be thine,
We worship at thy ocean shrine.

If there are storms upon the sea,
Before those storms we scud and flee;

And there are tempests too on land,
Which are not quell'd by mortal hand :
Whether we are on shore or sea,
Life is one vast uncertainty.

Lady of grace ! all thanks to thee,
Honour, and benedicite !

Keep us, we pray thee, from the snare,
Of sunken rock, from lightning's glare ;
From bolts that shatter the lonely bark ;
From treacherous fog, and midnight dark ;
From unknown monsters of the deep,
Who wake when kindlier creatures sleep.

Hear, oh hear ! the seaman's prayer,
Lady of grace, we court thy care.

But, above all, oh ! guard us well
From the great Strega's mighty spell ;
Let her not come our bark before,
But circle us with the ocean's roar,
That, triple bound by sea-girt zone,
She may not claim us for her own.

Lady of grace ! we give to thee,
Honour and benedicite !

“ How strange,” said Ildegarda, “ that when the image of the Deity is so awfully seen in this tremendous element around us, the human mind should be sufficiently darkened to make a little

figure of wood the symbol through which that power is acknowledged."

"It is indeed, beloved Ildegarda; but the ignorant and coarser orders of intellect, perhaps, require some more gross means by which to perceive and worship the Great Ruling Power: all homage is good that is sincere homage."

"Perhaps in itself; but it leads to consequences of tremendous evil; and it is therefore to be hoped the time will come, when the light will dispel the darkness." Thus in converse of varied and delightful kind the hours flew past as swiftly as their bark bounded over the wave.

"We are going to have another rude brush from the wings of the wind," said the captain; "Stow the Signora in a sheltered place—be ready to greet the storm." Again it came, but in a far gentler degree, and passed away scarcely touching the vessel.

"Yes!" said the captain; "we only got the tail of that one; there are two gone by: now for

the third, if that were well over, all would be right." Slight showers and gusty breezes continued alternately for the rest of the day. At sunset there was a dead calm; the sails were hoisted, and the helmsman steered every way to court the least air, but in vain; the canvas flapped ponderously against the mast, and the rowers plied their oars wearily through the heavy swell which remained from the morning's gale. A pallid moon broke out occasionally from behind dark driving clouds; and through the transparent mist of a shower, the lunar rainbow spanned the arch of Heaven; it bent its bow precisely across their vessel, and every one who stood beneath it seemed changed to a shadow, so whitely pure were all objects which came within its rays. There was a dead silence on board; nought was heard, save the booming of the wave against the vessel's side, which made her tremble and reel where she sat in the water with its lashing force.

“A sail ! a sail !” cried the helmsman ; “ look out to larboard.”

“ It is the Strega !” cried every man at once, and down they sank upon their knees. An involuntary awe passed over every heart : Ildegarda pressed more closely to Ranieri’s side ; and whether or not her imagination was struck, and her senses deceived her, she never could decide, but she thought she heard a sweet unearthly music.

“ Do you hear that, Ranieri ?”

“ It is the coming breeze playing in the ropes ; do you not see, love mine, how they thrill ?”

“ Nay, listen,” she said, “ it is *more* than the breeze.”

At that instant a small and almost circular boat passed before the prow of their vessel ; three times did it slowly sail round them, then lying-to in the ray of the shadowy bow, La Strega herself stood up. Her garment was of

dazzling whiteness, and her long hair as white. She raised her arms first to Heaven, then pointed to the deep.—The breeze freshened to a gale ; the galley and La Strega's bark passed each other like lightning : the sail of the latter was visible for about a minute, then lost to their sight.

“ All hands to work,” roared the captain with thundering voice ; and directly all was bustle and activity.

“ Make fast the loose geer—take the dog out of the way, but see ye do not hurt him ; dogs are lucky at sea or on shore ; who knows what he may have done for us just now ? There, toss these barrels aside, or overboard with them at once ; we have no time for thinking of such things now—make fast that rope yonder—down with the mast ;” and very shortly it was hard to say which roared loudest, the wind or the captain. Ildegarda had never before witnessed the tremendous scene which ensued. Lashed to the

vessel's side, the climbing waves broke over her, and stunned her with their force : all was pitchy darkness, except when the forked lightning darted across the heavens. While her senses lasted she prayed, but the bellowing elements and the furious motion of the vessel soon rendered her insensible even to Ranieri's care. What was his despair, when a tremendous shock informed him they had struck upon a rock. The scene of confusion which followed prevented the sufferers from any distinct recollection afterwards of the appalling moment. The first thing of which Ildegarda became conscious, was being in the presence of Ermenegilda;—Ermenegilda, no longer the proud and cold person whom she feared while she honoured, but a gentle and subdued being, who seemed to think no kindness which she could pay was sufficiently tender to express the sentiment she felt.

Ildegarda learnt that many days had

elapsed since they had been wrecked upon the Isola della Gorgona. During the tremendous tempest, several vessels had gone down in sight of the harbour; but one dismantled galley outlived its fury, and at intervals was seen in the lightning's glare, tossing like a hulk upon the ocean, and driving fast on shore, where inevitable death seemed to await the wretched crew! but that Power which commands all things turned this very circumstance to safety. The galley lay fast where she had struck, till daylight broke; and the violence of the tempest having abated, boats went out to the relief of the sufferers, and every creature on board was saved.

When the above details were made known to Ildegarda, her heart was too full of thankfulness for utterance; but by degrees she learnt to bear the full tide of prosperity and bliss, (not less astounding than that of sorrow) which now rolled in upon her, and with the perfect

consent, nay even joyful thankfulness of the Lanfreducci, she received Ranieri as her affianced husband; but the shadow to this picture of felicity, the more than shadow, its terrible and most painful feature, was the disappearance of Rachaella and Radegonda.

“Never,” cried Ildegarda to Ranieri, “never can I consent to become your bride till the fate of these dear objects of my affection is ascertained.”

Maestrillo and Bruno Grillo determined, with Ildegarda’s leave, to go in quest of them. “Your poor fool has done nothing for you yet, Signora; and now, that every thing is right, I must be off to help to wind-up the ravellings of the clue; and yet I am but a fool either, to leave good cheer and happy faces, and pure air, for the infected shore of the Arno, its dying inhabitants, and miserable survivors.”

The melancholy tidings, of the plague’s ravaging Pisa, now caused Ildegarda infinite anguish.

“It would have been too much felicity,” she observed, addressing Ermenegilda, “had my happiness come to me unalloyed !”

“And I,” said Ermenegilda, “must acknowledge that you ought to feel for the sweet Rachaela, whose gentle and endearing qualities have done more service towards restoring me to a sense of justice, than any other person whatever. With your principle you could never have been happy with my son, unless my heart had been changed, and I know not to what other source except that of Heaven I can attribute the complete renewal of sentiment which has taken place in my mind.”

Thus, in delightful conversation, in the love and possession of the chief object of her life, Ildegarda's existence once more assumed its pristine brightness, and in a short time after, her complement of happiness was fulfilled. A crowded galley came sailing into the harbour ; it brought her own damsel once more blooming

in beauty ; it brought too, Edoardo, the youthful hero ; his uncle Hawkwood, and his future brother-in-law, surnamed *Il Falcone* : but of all this happy group, who was more blessed than the good Radegonda, the faithful nurse, when she clasped her beloved child, and her dear nursing in her arms ? The mutual explanations which took place, the transports of joy and astonishment which mingled with these, were almost overpowering in their brightness. But real enduring happiness consists of more sober material, and it was only when time had chastened these transports, that they could be truly said to appreciate their fate.

After the hand of Heaven had removed from Pisa the dreadful scourge of the plague, a brief moment of prosperity and glory ensued, and at that moment all the personages whose histories have been related in these pages, returned thither to celebrate the nuptials of Ildegarda and Rachaella. The poets and the

painters of that day were profuse of tribute, and Messer Cino declared, that had not the planet Venus passed her superior δ on that very month, the very reverse of the present bliss must have ensued to all parties. "Thank God," he added, "*it is as it is*. And now Zanobi may write epithalamiums without end; they will be all fine, all excellent; there is no inimical star to cross the influence of his muse."

Edoardo's noble conduct was the theme of every tongue. He became a celebrated warrior; and the privations of his boyish days were amply repaid by the sterling merit which they impressed on his ripened years.

On the day when the nuptials took place, Lanfreducci, leading his bride in one hand and his mother in the other, conducted them to his palace gate; when, pointing to the motto which still exists as a record of his happiness, he said, "May this be a memorial to future gene-

rations,—that those who obey the dictates of virtue, are not forsaken in their greatest extremity; and may an equal portion of felicity to that which we enjoy, be the lot of all those who read these words—‘ALLA GIORNATA.’ ”

THE END.

NOTES.

Dans le 14^{eme}. Siècle les Italiens joignoit un esprit d'observation très exercé à une grande habitude de se mêler avec des peuples d'autre croyance. Le mépris qu'il avoit conçu pour la Cour d'Avignon leur avoit fait secouer presque absolument le joug de l'Eglise Romaine tandis que dans le même temps les esprits étoient resté bien plus soumis en France, &c. &c. &c.—Sismondi, Vol. VII. chap. xlviii. page 4.

Il Palazzo Lanfreducci.

Del motto “ Alla Giornata” posto nel sopraornato della Porta e della Catena quivi appesa, non v'e memoria nè tradizione che ne indietro il valore. Sappiamo soltanto che dietro al Palazzo eravi la chiesa di S. Bingio detto delle Catene di padronato della medesima famiglia Lanfreducci.—Morrone's Pisa, page 343.

Les Colonies de Sardaigne et de Corse qui avoient été pour eux (les Pisans) des Pepinières de matelôts, leur avoit été enlevées. Des lors les Pisans s'étoient addonnés aux manufactures et à l'agriculture.—Sismondi Républiques, Vol. VI. page 414.

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University Of California, Los Angeles



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